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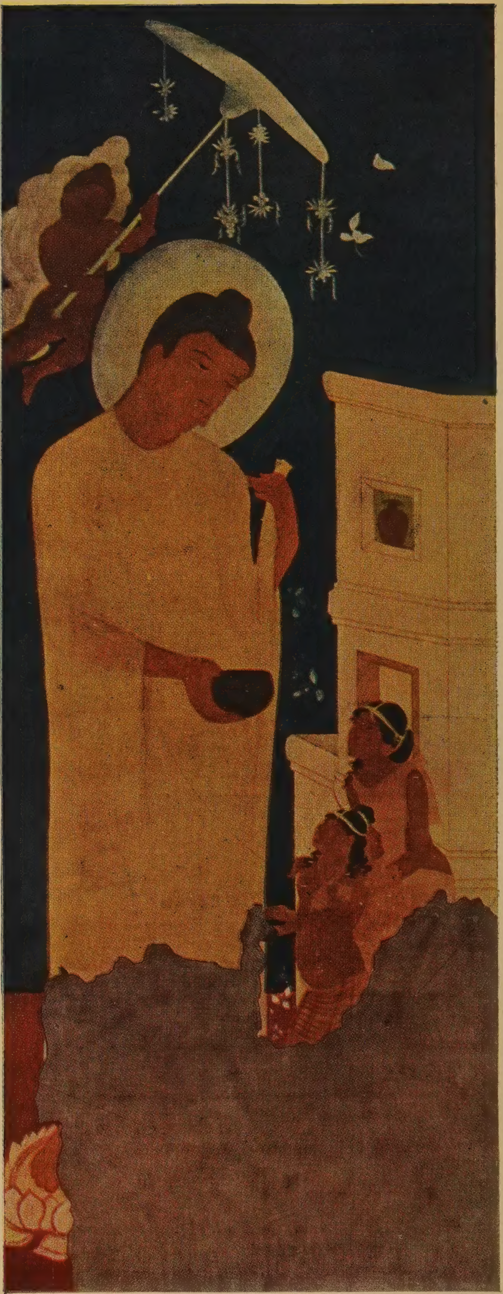
MY PILGRIMAGES
TO AJANTA & BAGH



BUDDHA'S RETURN TO HIS WIFE AND SON, AFTER HIS ENLIGHTENMENT.

CAVE 17. (See page 148)

In the Oriental Department of the British Museum

MY PILGRIMAGES TO AJANTA & BAGH

By

SRI MUKUL CHANDRA DEY

With an Introduction by

LAURENCE BINYON

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TO THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM WINSTANLY PEARSON

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INTRODUCTION

The wall paintings of Ajanta have been made the subject of elaborate and sumptuous works, such as the two folio volumes published by Mr. John Griffiths in 1896-7, and the portfolio of reproductions of copies made by Lady Herringham and her assistants, published, with essays and descriptions by various hands, for the India Society, in 1915. These publications are in the hands of the scholars; but there is room and need for a more popular book on the paintings, for they should be known to all the world. The present work, written by Mr. Mukul Dey, a young Indian artist, who has himself made copies from the paintings, will do something, I hope, towards supplying that need.

It is somewhat presumptuous for one who has himself never seen the paintings to write about them. But as a matter of fact very few indeed of the English in India have ever visited the caves, and if there is any excuse for my presumption, it is that I have been for a good many years a student of the art of Asia, and of the relations between the arts of the various countries of that continent. In the art of Asia, Ajanta is one of the central monuments. It is indeed one of the great monuments in the art of the world.

In China there once existed countless frescoes on a grand scale, among them probably some of the finest paintings ever made. But all, save a few provincial specimens, have perished. All the more therefore must we prize the splendid series still existing at Ajanta, together with those, less known but equally wonderful, though alas ! only a mere remnant, at Bagh.

Though known to me only through copies and photographs, these frescoes—not technically " frescoes " in the strict sense of the term, but the word is convenient—seem more wonderful, the more they are studied. My approach to Indian art was made by way of the art of the Further East, of China and Japan : and at first, my mind being filled with the enchantment of design, the mysterious felicity of spacing, of which the great masters of these countries had the secret, I was put out by the teeming Indian exuberance of Ajanta. But Ajanta shows many kinds of composition. Some of the paintings rather repel me still, others delight me more and more ; and I can well imagine that entering from the hot sunshine into those dim temples and gradually adapting one's eyes to the gloom, one would receive an immense, an overpowering impression of an art unmatched for its fullness, its spontaneity, its glow and diversity of living forms. Groups, lovely and animated in their natural movement and repose, single figures of strange majesty, of ineffable compassion, attract the eye and haunt the memory. One of the most unforgettable things is the group of the woman and child making offerings to the glorified Buddha, reproduced in this book from Mr. Mukul Dey's copy. The group of the woman and child alone has been illustrated both in Mr. Griffiths's book and in the India Society's publication; but, strange to say, with the great figure of the Buddha omitted, so that one could only guess at the motive inspiring the movement of the mother and her boy. For this alone we should owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dey. I remember no picture anywhere more profoundly impressive in grandeur and in tenderness. Primitive these paintings might be called, in the sense that they are unsophisticated and fresh in their attack on pictorial problems; but what astonishing ease, what freedom from stiff, accepted formula these artists had! They have the kind of surprising instinctive mastery, unteased and unlaboured, that a gifted child will show in rendering forms and movements.

Mr. Rothenstein, who is in peculiar sympathy with Indian art, has justly made the point that in China and Japan, Buddhism was a foreign religion, and Buddhist art came to these countries with a hieratic tradition already fixed and formulated. The Chinese and Japanese masters had a secular art of their own, but in their Buddhist works employed a special style; their paintings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas evoke mysterious and remote presences, of strange beauty and spiritual aspect, as if appearing out of the darkness above and apart from the troubled world of men. The Ajanta paintings are all Buddhist; are steeped in Buddhist faith and fervour; but here the divine is not divorced from the human, nor the spirit from the body. To these Indian artists, the Buddha and his disciples were Indians, men of their own race; they did not need to make a translation from foreign to familiar terms, as did the medieval European painters in depicting the Gospel story, in order to make the scenes intelligible. They painted a world in which their minds were at home. If you come to think of it, nearly all the religious art with which we are familiar is not in this case; it deals with far-off events, circumstanced in surroundings neither known nor understood save through books. The paintings of Ajanta have frequently for subject the life of the Buddha in previous incarnations,—in the guise of elephant, deer or wild goose. Hence we see pictured the actual scenes that were before the painters' eyes; the courts of princes, the throngs of servants, the musicians, the huntsmen, the dancing girls. The background of leafy nature is there; the animals and birds have been seen and studied with as much interest as the human forms. In the paintings of Bagh —or in what little remains of them—the motives seem still more "worldly" and gay. There is a circle of girl musicians in one of the Bagh caves, which is quite astounding in its freshness of ease and power; it is (to judge from the drawing reproduced here, facing page 237) like a very modern painting, yet with something that our modern painting lacks.

These Indian pictures were all of religious inspiration. Probably to the artists the religious import seemed everything; their conscious endeavour was concentrated upon that. Design, colour, composition, all the purely artistic elements of their work, were left to the more intuitive activities of the mind. From this, I think, comes the happiness of their art; it is not self-conscious; it solves difficult problems not by scientifically working out a theory but simply—*ambulando*. Our most modern art tortures itself in its austere quest of a purely æsthetic aim. But it is a perplexing paradox of human nature that to choose a certain aim and consciously pursue it rarely ends in perfect accomplishment of that aim; if the aim is reached it is at the cost of impoverishment.

If one were asked to put into one word the secret of these paintings,—the secret of their continuing power to impress and charm us—one might well answer *life*; for they affect us in the same way that the living movements of men and women, children, and animals affect us; with a deep content and unconscious sympathy. And it is not merely a sort of extract from life that they yield—a mood of pleasure, a mood of sadness or bitterness, a mood of devotion or a mood of frivolity,—it is just life itself, all life, with its joyous impulses of body and spirit, the forward stride of adventure, the haltings of the mind and turns upon itself, its abandonment to sorrow, its renunciations, its victories. The fruit of Buddhist doctrine, it seems, is not negation but an experience of what Professor Anesaki, in his interpretation of Buddhist art, calls "The Communion of

Life," which is the escaping from the prison and pain of self.

The cave-temples of Ajanta, as the reader will realize from Mr. Mukul Dey's vivid account of his pilgrimage thither, are not easy of access, and present all sorts of discomforts and even dangers—from tigers and the stings of wild bees—as a sort of trial and initiation. I am glad that even millionaires cannot charm away these obstacles; they too must submit to this test of the reality of their desire to see these famous works. Perhaps it were well that other great works of art were guarded in some such manner from the impertinent patronage of the profane.

Mr. Dey went to Ajanta and Bagh in the spirit of a pilgrim. He is one of those Indians who seek to revive the art of India in the Indian spirit. And it is to Ajanta that the modern Indian artist rightly turns, or should turn, for there is nothing really antiquated in those frescoes, they still radiate life; they show what the Indian genius could achieve on a grand scale in the past, and may achieve again. Indians in general take far too little interest in their own art, whether ancient or contemporary. They should realise that through painting and sculpture, in which mankind instinctively embodies its deepest thoughts and ideals, a race speaks to the world in a language needing no translation. All over the world is a newly-stirred curiosity and interest in the art of India. We look to Indians to honour their art and their artists ; to cherish the great monuments of the past and to foster the gifts of the living ; for art, if it is to enjoy the fulness and glory of expression, needs the co-operation of the whole people out of which it comes.

LAURENCE BINYON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

How can I sufficiently express my gratitude to the friends who helped me write this book?

Within the sacred rock-temples of Ajanta and Bagh abide in darkness and neglect gods and goddesses; Buddhas and monks; kings and queens; courtiers and hunters; musicians and dancing girls; animals and flowers.

Two thousand years ago they were carved in the rock or painted on the wall. Every day as dusk approaches, the rays of the dying sun penetrate for a brief while the caverns. The figures in the carvings and the frescoes flush into a semblance of life, the mighty sun,—the source of all vitality—reminds them that he at least has not forgotten them.

Even so to me, working and ransacking memories in this cold and foggy climate of England, in a shelter by a hot fire-side, hard put to it sometimes to keep body and soul alive, the kindness of my friends has come like the sovereign touch of the sun to the darkness at Ajanta, and has warmed my heart and revived many scenes and incidents.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Kallianjee Curumsey, of Bombay, who owns the copies of the wall-paintings which I made in the caves and has taken immense trouble in sending them to England in order that they might be reproduced for this book.

My heartfelt acknowledgments are also owing to Messrs. Johnston & Hoffmann, of Calcutta; to Dr. F. W. Thomas, the librarian of the Indian Office, for his valuable assistance; to Mr. F. J. Richter, the Hon. Secretary of The India Society; to all who gave me permission to make use of the photographs of the caves and frescoes and particularly some of Lady Herringham's copies of works at the Ajanta caves.

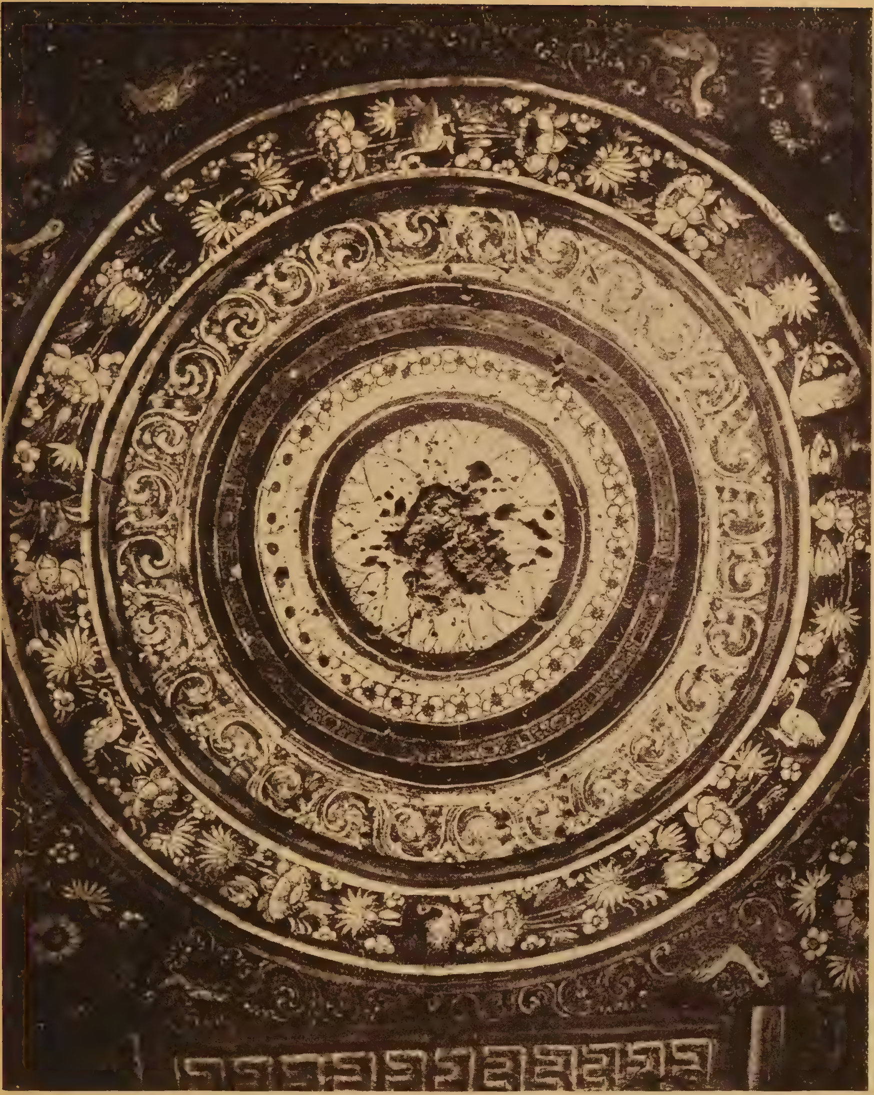
I am also indebted to the book of James Fergusson and Dr. Burgess on the *Cave Temples of India*, from which I have taken some valuable information.

To friends who not only encouraged me in various ways in my effort but patiently endeavoured to put my wild English into some sort of shape, my sincerest thanks are due: Mr. Laurence Binyon, Miss Eve Maggs, Mr. & Mrs. Louis F. Fergusson, Professor Selwyn Image, Mr. Thomas Sturge Moore, the Misses Dorothy Larcher, Elsie Maggs, Ida A. R. Wylie, Rachel Barrett, Mr. Eddie Whaley, Mr. Henry Clifford

Maggs, Mr. Muirhead Bone, Mr. Lionel G. Pearson, Mr. & Mrs. Eliot Druce, Mr. & Mrs. A. R. Smith, and my great brother artists, Srijukta Nanda lal Basu and Surendra Nath Kar.

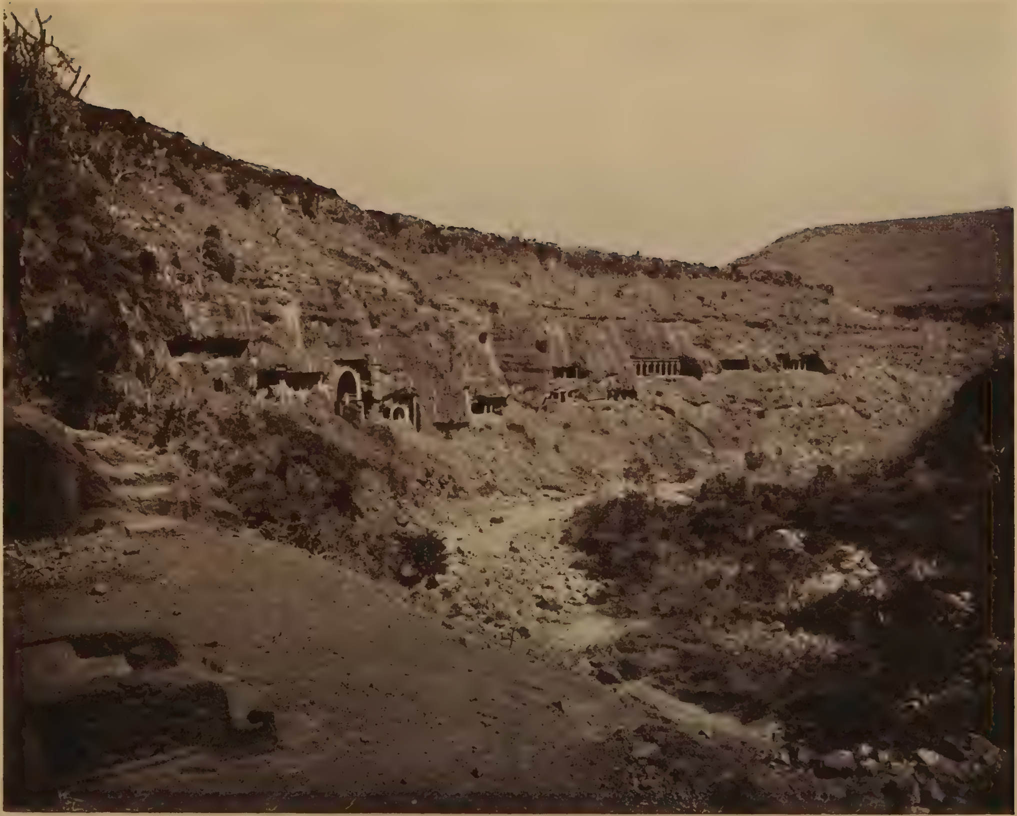
On many occasions during this literary voyage the seas have been rough, though at other times I sailed with winds that favoured my course. Almost within sight of the coast towards which my hopes were directed my vessel ran aground in shallow waters. On an early autumn morning while I despaired two pilots came aboard and steered my little ship to safety, and soon I perceived the faint black line of the shore through the mist. To these pilots, Miss Elsie M, C. Druce and Mr. W. E. " Pussyfoot " Johnson, my heart overflows with gratitude, for without them I could never have reached the harbour.

Mecklenburgh Square,
London, W.C.



CEILING OF SHRINE.

Cave I.



GENERAL VIEW OF AJANTA CAVES.

Showing Caves 1 to 17.

MY PILGRIMAGES TO AJANTA AND BAGH

CHAPTER ONE

MY FIRST PILGRIMAGE TO AJANTA

In Western India, in the heart of the lonely Bindha Hills, in the State of Hyderabad, near the village of Ajanta, there exists a shrine of Religion and Art, which from time immemorial has attracted pilgrims and students, in spite of its remoteness. This shrine consists of the Ajanta caves and the wealth of ancient art and architecture in which they abound.

As a young boy, Art fascinated me, and I was ever hearing about these famous caves and their marvellous frescoes. Even then I determined that one day I would visit them myself, and begin, what I hoped would be the study of the art-work of all nationalities, by the study of the ancient Buddhist arts of India. On leaving school I thought many a time of trying to journey to Ajanta; but when I expressed this desire to my friends I met with little encouragement. They laughed at the project and warned me of all the perils from robbers and thieves which I should encounter by the way in the jungle. They threatened me with tigers and snakes, with cholera and plague—nay, even with starvation, as there would be great difficulty in procuring food in a dry desert-like land amongst the poverty-stricken Mahomedan villagers.

I was young and poor, and I had no money whatever with which to carry out my ideas for this long journey of over a thousand miles from my home in Bengal. But I did not give up my ambition; I kept it before me steadily for many years. Being somewhat an artist, I was able to earn a little money, and I set about sketching portraits for a very few rupees each, till by the end of the year 1917 I had saved about two hundred and fifty rupees. I then set out for the caves, my luggage consisting of an attaché case with a few drawing materials and toilet necessaries, and a blanket under my arm. Third-class travel in India is cheap. A third-class ticket from Howrah station, Calcutta, to Jalgaon station by the Bombay mail on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, a distance of about a thousand miles, cost me just over a pound (£1).

From Howrah station the train went through typically Bengali villages of straw-thatched houses, with banana trees growing amongst the thick bushes, and acres of bamboo and bettle-nut groves. Tiny ancient ponds, covered with thick green slime, in which the ducks were busily seeking their food were on every hand. Steps of old brick led down to the water. All along the line children playing in the roads stopped to gaze at our train, and women were busy at their household work. On we sped through shadowy green villages with cocoanut and mango groves, and the bright red sun was setting as we entered the flat ricefield plains, dotted here and there with a few dark trees sharply silhouetted against the flaming sky. I sat at my window, gazing out and enjoying the scenery through which I was passing.

I was travelling in the European third-class compartment. There is almost always a European compartment on the Indian trains, but to travel in it a man, no matter what his race, need only wear European dress. I occupied a whole bunk for my night's sleep in great comfort.

There was one other man in my compartment; what his nationality was I could not guess, but he told me he was a dealer in Oriental and Egyptian antiques, had a shop in Calcutta, and was going on a short visit on business to Bombay. We soon became friends, and he showed me a few objects of *virtu* he had with him in his trunk, especially some Persian handbags, which were richly embroidered in gold, red and green. Amongst his treasures I found an old Egyptian seal of red stone dating from five to seven centuries B.C. He was delighted to sell this to me for two rupees, and it was constantly with me, until recently in London I thought I would have it mounted as a ring, but, alas, the jeweller to whom I took it broke the stone.

Next morning, on our arrival at Nagpur, an altogether strange sight met my eyes. The platform and the approach to the station were swarming with orange sellers, who had baskets heaped up with oranges on their heads, shoulders, and in their hands, loudly shouting their wares. Everyone buys oranges in Nagpur as a duty, it is so famous for them, and they are a bargain. For a rupee (about 1s. 4d.) one can get a score of large ones. It was really beautiful to see this lovely fruit in such profusion, and I hastened to buy some for myself.

The mail train does not loiter on the way, but here it stopped for half-an-hour. Though I was travelling in the European compartment in European dress, I carried with me an Indian cap, which I hardly ever wore except in the cities. I was careful not to make use of it in the train, for whenever we stopped at a station the other Eurasians and Anglo-Indian passengers, of whom there were four or five, put on their solar topees to guard the door from any native intruder.

But now at the last moment a dark, middle-aged Marathi gentleman with his wife, followed by a coolie with bundles of luggage on his head, hurriedly entered our compartment. Two of my travelling companions tried to prevent their entry; but the newcomer was very strong and energetic, and, by dint of a certain amount of force, successfully stormed the stronghold and occupied a seat, adjuring his wife in the Marathi language not to budge an inch whatever happened. I knew what he meant, but kept quiet, and watched for the march of events. Then two of the Anglo-Indians left the train and reported matters to the stationmaster and the guard. These officials duly appeared; the guard a European, the stationmaster an Indian. They invited the newcomers to vacate the carriage, promising to find them seats in another part of the train. But the husband was adamant: "I'm not going to move from my seat. You can do what you like. I know the rule all right, and I know a case like this happened before, and it went up to the High Court at Bombay. So I know what I am doing because I am a pleader!" By that time a small crowd had gathered, and a policeman arrived on the spot. I was enjoying the fun, and watched with excitement to see who would win. But time was up, the train could not wait any longer, and nothing could be done. The guard whistled and waved his green flag, the train started, the stationmaster quietly grumbled to himself, and the audience on the platform gave us a rousing cheer. The intruders were left victoriously in possession, looking immensely pleased with themselves. Theirs was not a long journey, however, and by nightfall they had reached their destination.

It was a cold, wintry month, and especially so in that part of India. As it grew very bitter during the night, I took my rug out of the parcel and wrapped myself in it. The train ultimately arrived at Jalgaon, the nearest railway station for the caves, at half-past two on a pitch dark morning. The journey from Calcutta had been nine hundred and sixty two miles. As I had not much luggage with me, I enquired of one of the station porters whether I could get a tanga to start off for the Ajanta caves at once.

The people of this part are Marathas, and they only speak that language. Besides Bengali I could speak a little Hindustani, and somehow I made my porter understand my wish; but he asked me to wait for the morning light, assuring me that I should get a conveyance in time. However, I was impatient and went to the stationmaster to explain my intention. He confirmed what the porter had told me, adding that if the tourists and visitors intending to visit these caves would inform him or the mamlatdar (village headman, locally called "patel") beforehand, proper tangas could be engaged. Some of the rich tourists bring their own motor cars with them and do the journey to the caves in an hour or two; but that being impossible for me, I had to wait patiently until morning broke.

My old porter pointed out to me a group of men chatting round a fire outside the station, as they waited for daybreak; these were the tanga men. One of them agreed to take me for twenty-six rupees, which was more than I had paid to come up to Jalgaon from Calcutta, and in the early dawn we started off for the caves.

This being my first tour in Western India, I noticed many differences in the scenery, as the eastern sky lightened from minute to minute. The villagers were not yet awake, but gradually a few people appeared here and there on the road, crossing from one side to the other, washing themselves, or going to work. They wore coloured turbans, especially red, like yards of thick rope wound round their heads.

The houses in the villages were also quite different from those in Bengal. They were squat constructions, built of stone, brick and mud, with angular roofs decorated with black and red tiles; while the Bengal huts have thatched roofs, which hunch like a frightened cat's back, and the plain mud walls look much nicer among the masses of green vegetation. On my left were some Hindu temples (derived from the type of Bodh Gaya) with beautiful round carvings on the top. It was a cold but very refreshing morning, and I wrapped myself up in my rug.

As we were going slowly through the village I saw a woman carrying milk on her head, and pouring it out into pots at the doors of some of the houses along the road. I enquired of my tanga man whether I could get a glass of milk to drink. He replied, "Oh yes, if you wish." He called the milk-seller, who came, saying, "But how will you drink?" I brought out my folding glass, at which she seemed very surprised and smiled. She was a beautiful young woman, wearing long, delicate ear-rings, a rich red choli on which tiny pieces of mirror sparkled in the sunshine, and a skirt of innumerable folds. She was very lovely indeed, and reminded me of our old legend of Radha of Brindaban and the Gopi girls. After finishing my milk, I searched for my camera, intending to take a snapshot of her, but she disappeared, saying she had much to do before the other people woke up, and after that she had to go with the rest to work in the fields.

By this time we had reached the end of the village, and my tangaman suddenly stopped the cart and alighted. But he soon came back, bearing a load of straw and corn for his horse and some food for himself, not having known beforehand that he would have to make such a long journey that day. He said to me: "You also will get something to eat later on in some village on the way."

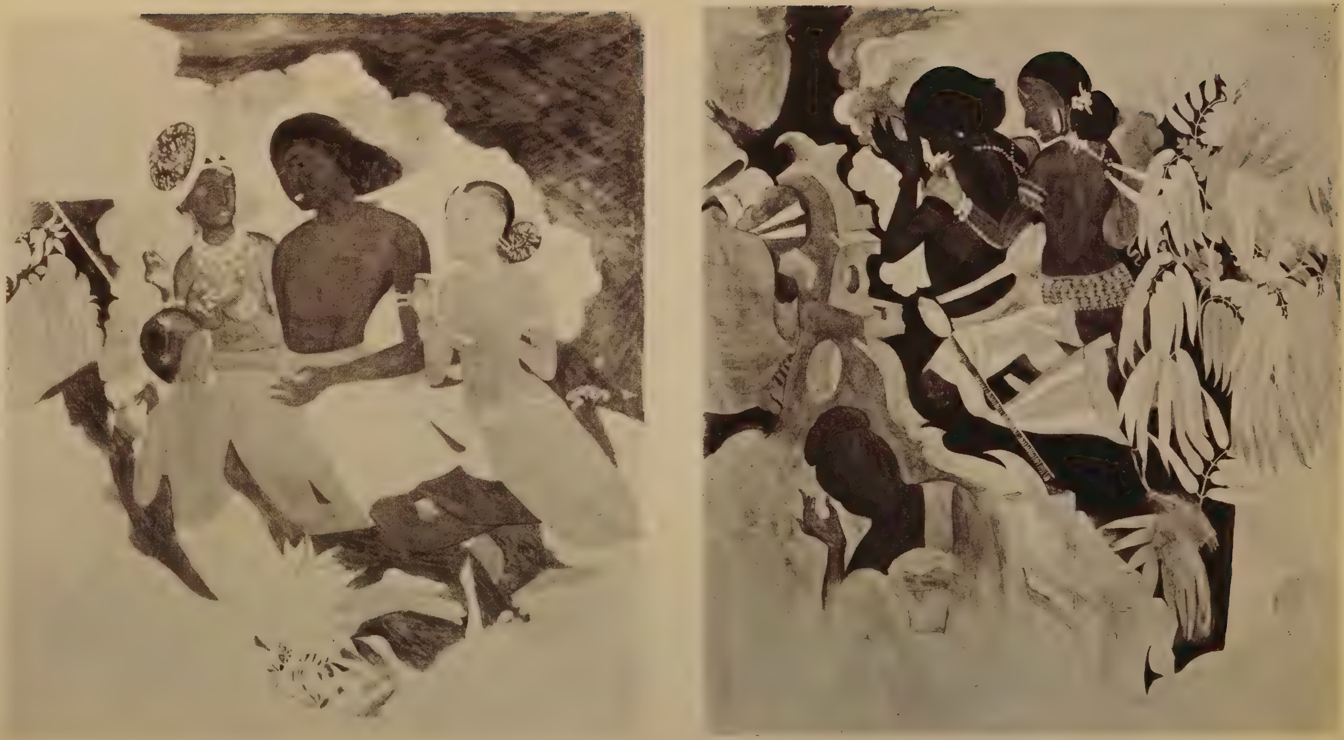
The sun had risen and was shining radiantly as we started up the lonely road at the rate of three or four miles an hour. This, in an age of swift motors, must appear rather slow progress, but those sturdy little horses will cover as much as forty miles in a day at this leisurely pace. The road was quite good, broad, and bordered on either side with numerous nim, banyan, ashath and babla trees.

The tanga is a funny kind of cart drawn by small ponies. The passenger has to sit behind the driver in a sort of box, which protects him from falling out as the tanga jolts along or takes sharp corners over the hills and downs. It is two-wheeled, like the bullock cart; the wheels have iron bands, and there are no springs. As it runs it makes a terrible noise; one can neither speak nor hear, and soon a gripping pain spreads over the body. In this way we traversed the villages and ghats (as roads up a steep incline are called in the Marathi dialect).

By about ten in the morning we arrived at a village called Neri, which stands on a beautiful little river of the same name. Here the women were cleaning their brass and copper jars before filling them with water. We crossed the river at the little ford, and arrived at the gateway in the ancient wall which surrounds the village. Houses are built on this wall—of old Hindu architectural design with beautiful carved doors and balconies; and there are numbers of Hindu

THE VILLAGE AND RIVER NERI.

DESCENDING A GHAT ON THE WAY TO AJANTA.



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GROUPS OF FLYING FIGURES.
CAVE 17.

temples. While crossing the river I heard that there was a bazaar where I could buy some food; but when we arrived in the village I observed that almost all the doors were shut, wild dogs were roaming about, and the whole place was deserted. There had been a plague scare, and all the inhabitants had fled. It was a good thing I had bought my glass of milk from the girl at Jalgaon.

While passing through this deserted village I noticed beautiful carvings and decorative designs on the wooden doors, and by the steps leading to the temples and houses, as well as perforated and carved windows on the balconies. It was sad to see this charming village with all the houses locked up, and wearing such an air of unusual desolation, in spite of the glorious sunshine.

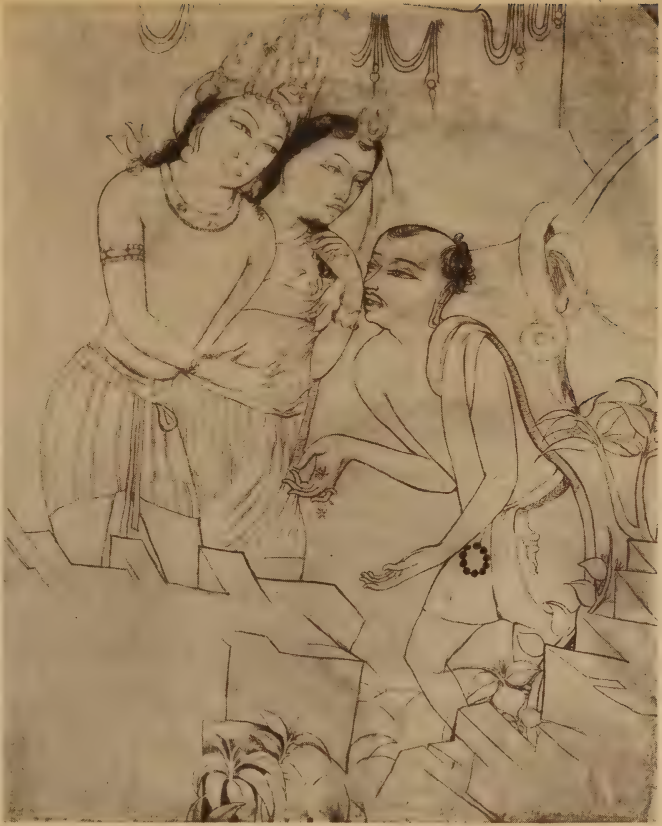
Leaving the village, as soon as we found ourselves in the open country, to my amazement, we came upon hundreds of tiny huts clumsily made of palmyra leaves, all huddled together about a couple of hundred yards away. These contained the inhabitants, who had fled with all their children and livestock.

After we left Neri, the farther we went the barer became the land. There was hardly a stick of vegetation visible, and the whole ground was of a rich golden-brown tint. The road here is very lonely and but occasionally do you meet a few people, or some squeaking bullock carts laden with cotton, hay or wood, creeping slowly along. In the distance could be seen some straggling villages consisting for the most part of but a few houses each. These houses bear a curious resemblance to solid blocks of clay, the roof being flat and low, like a lid.

This road to the south is one of the ancient highways of the world, and in my imagination I could see the countless hordes of Aryans, and armed Mahomedan invaders, who passed this way to the conquest of Southern India. Most stirring of all to me, however, was the thought of the great stream of Buddhist pilgrims, not only from India but from far off China, to whom this road had been the sacred way to the Ajanta caves. It thrilled me to realize that I too formed part of this unending procession, and to believe that unending processions would still follow me. All along the road we were continually starting up herds of black buck and deer, which fled on our approach, while wild doves rose in pairs.

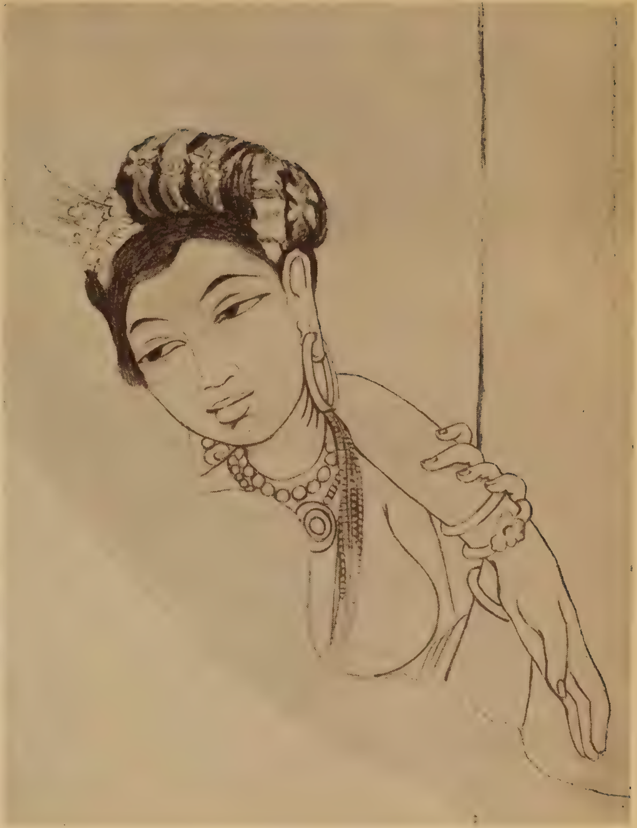
At last we saw on the horizon the long ranges of the Bindha Hills of the Dekkan, and my tangaman said: " The lenas (lena means cave) are there in those hills." Through this district we crossed and re-crossed a river called the Baghora, which has its source in the Ajanta caves. The small village of Fardapur was not very far: it is the first village of the Nizam's State of Hyderabad. At last, just before sunset, we arrived at Fardapur, and beyond this village could be seen on our right the little dak-bungalow, where my tangaman wanted to take me, but I insisted that he should take me first to the caves. He told me that he could not do this, as the road would shortly become very bad.

Soon we came to a point where the road descends to the river, dotted with boulders and impossible for the tanga to cross. So I settled with the driver and proceeded on foot to the caves. On my way I came across a small white tent occupied by some official Mussulmans. One of them told me he was the curator of the caves, and said it was too late an hour to go to them, but I turned a deaf ear to his protests and continued on my way. All along I made my way over the jungle road, now leaping from boulder to boulder, now threading my way cautiously through the tangled undergrowth of dense vegetation. Some of these boulders are marked with a bright vermilion splash or a roughly drawn figure, which are objects of devotion to the neighbouring Hindu hill tribes. Amongst the black boulders grew some mowah trees, which were the only species I could recognise. Evening was drawing in, all was silent, save for the rustling of the little night birds and animals who wake up at that hour for their nocturnal wanderings. Suddenly I heard distinctly the sound of marching footsteps which seemed to be approaching me. From afar I saw a band of people, who proved to be Japanese, marching like soldiers one behind the other, with tight bandages on their legs, wearing a peculiar white dress and crowned with white solar topees. Amongst them was my friend Mr. Kampo Arai, a well-known Japanese artist, whom I had previously met in Japan. He was very much astonished to see me alone, and wondered how I got there! He introduced me to one of his friends, Mr. Sawamura (who is now professor at Kyoto Imperial University in Japan), and asked me whether I would join them as it was getting so late, but I said, "No; I would like to see the caves first. I have travelled all this way and must see the caves before I do anything else," and I asked him for a few directions: how far it was, which was the best road to pursue and so forth. He said, "All right,



KING, QUEEN AND BEGGAR GROUP.

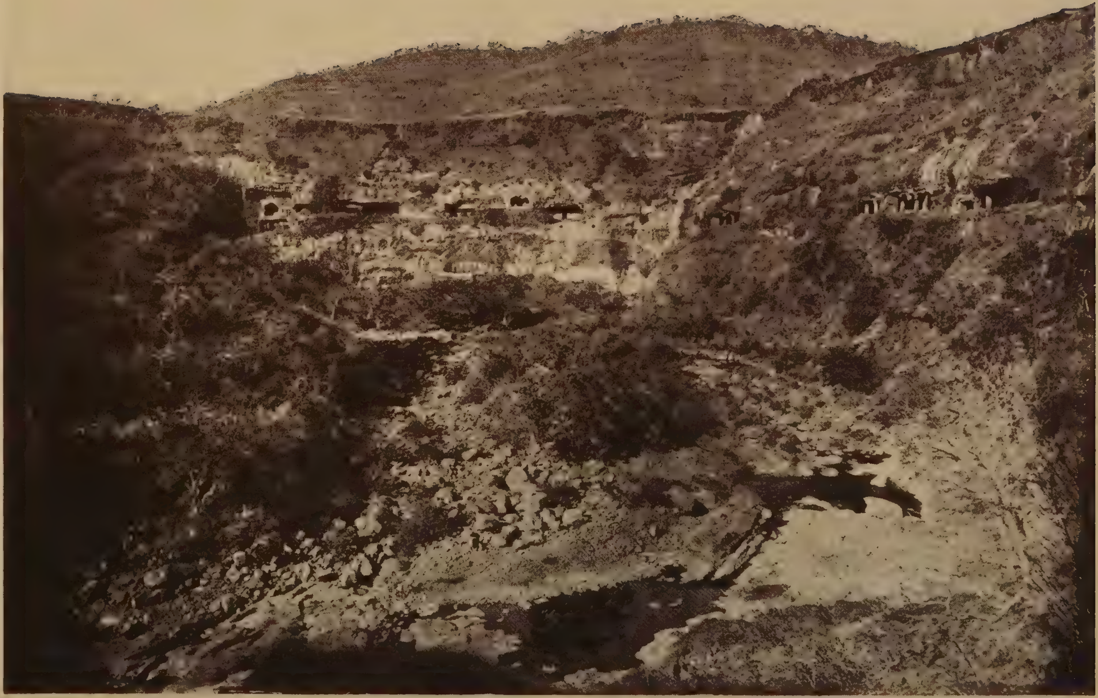
Cave 17.



GIRL'S HEAD.

Cave 17.

From carbon tracings by Miss Dorothy Larcher.



FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE AJANTA CAVES.

Showing Caves 16 to 26.

I had better come along with you," for being an artist himself, he understood my anxiety. After all, the caves were not very far, and crossing the same river Baghora twice again, Mr. Arai took me through a short cut and said, "You will soon see them now."

It is impossible for me to make my reader realize my feelings when I first saw the site of the caves. I was spell-bound. The natural splendour of the scene, its utter seclusion, the amphitheatre of hills enclosing the glen with a rugged rampart, shaped like a crescent moon, the little murmuring stream which flowed so gently through a landscape of such wild grandeur—all affected me deeply. As I looked more closely I perceived that out of the stone, which was of a glorious tinge of bluish mauve, had been hewn richly carved arches and columns, and that these formed the entrance to a series of cave-temples surpassing all that I had imagined. My companion and I remained for long in silent ecstasy. I felt completely satisfied. Just this one vision repaid the trouble of my journey a thousandfold.

All the way back to the bungalow, I talked to him of the magnificence of the things I had seen. Meanwhile I could hear the monkeys chattering, and saw them leaping and playing together high up on the side of the hills. My friend agreed with me, and said that it was the greatest and most wonderful thing he had ever seen in his life, and he thought himself lucky to be able to remain there for some time, copying the frescoes. Then later on he said to me: "Though we have only one little room for ourselves we will manage to put you up and you will have your meals with us." I was lucky to get this splendid invitation, which I at once accepted. So as soon as we arrived at the bungalow, my friend introduced me again in proper Japanese manner to his friend, Prof. Sentaro Sawamura, the leader of the party, and to all the other artists who came from Japan to copy the frescoes.

There were five or six of them sleeping in one room, and seeing the difficulty of an additional inmate, I said, "I don't mind sleeping on the floor, or in any hole or corner." So I tucked myself away in a little lean-to by the side of the bathroom (which was Prof. Sawamura's photographic dark room), in a cot (char-paya) which they had managed to borrow from the servants, and Araisan gave me one of his blankets, to which I added my own, and my attaché case served me as a pillow. Thus my bed was made. There were only two rooms in this small bungalow, and the second one was occupied by two other Japanese artists of quite a different establishment, who had also come at that time, on their own account, to copy some of the frescoes. It seemed to me that these two parties regarded one another with considerable indifference. Prof. Sawamura could speak a little English, but none of the others could except Araisan, who knew just a few words. However, by dumb show and pointing we succeeded in making ourselves understood.

While I was washing, before joining the party at supper, the awful smell of their soup and food made me quite ill; the fare, indeed, was really the least palatable I had ever tasted, and reminded me of my saddest days in Japan, while travelling in that country with Dr. Tagore. But after a whole day's journey in the hot sun, in a jolting tanga without any meal, I was naturally hungry and thirsty, and I rejoiced in having my rice with tea-water, and was very grateful for what they did for me. We soon hastened to bed, and thanking them all, I said Good-night. Prof. Sawamura said: "We hope to see you all right to-morrow morning." And Araisan asked me to close my window tight, as the tigers and panthers were wont to wander round the bungalow during the night.

CHAPTER TWO

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CAVES

EARLY next morning after a hurried breakfast we all set out for the caves, the sun shining gloriously; the day, however, being still cool. Talking with my Japanese friends as we trudged along, I learnt that the caves were between four and five miles south-west of the bungalow which we were at present occupying. The Fardapur village is the first border village of the Nizam's dominions; Ajanta is an old village lying north-west of Aurangabad, situated on top of the Bindha hills, which divide the province of Khandesh from the Dekkan. The population consists chiefly of Mussulmans and Hindus, who during many generations have lived amicably side by side. The village of Ajanta, being larger and more important than Fardapur, has given its name to the caves, and is now becoming famous throughout the whole world for its wealth of art treasures.

It is interesting to know how the caves, having lain hidden for about a thousand years, were re-discovered only a century ago, and revealed to the world generally.

In the year 1819 a British officer, retired from the Madras Army, was out alone in the jungle close to the Ajanta village, hunting round for tigers. Unsuccessful, he wound his way on and on through the wild stony tracks. Having pursued for some time his haphazardous course, and imagining himself far enough from all human beings, he was surprised to hear but a little way off a boy's shrill voice. Hastening his steps, the captain soon came up to a young herdsman talking to his herd of half-wild buffaloes in the middle of the jungle.

The boy, seeing a sahib, and consequently thinking to earn a little tip if he should show him the actual home of the tigers, led him a little way off from where he was standing and, pointing above the trees, said: "Look, sahib." Following eagerly with his eyes the boy's extended arm, he saw through the thick green foliage a little golden-red colour peering between a few mauve carved pillars or columns.

The captain, intensely excited, feeling himself to be about to make an important archæological discovery, sent immediately to the village for men to come with torches and drums, with axes and spears, to hew down the tangled clusters that throttled up the entrance to the caves. Thus a clearing was made in the jungle, and a passage forced into these long-forgotten city temples, which had flourished from about the third century B.C. to the seventh century A.D.

We were following a rough and narrow track, passing innumerable little valleys in which one might have found many a spot most suitable and convenient for pitching a tent amidst magnificent scenes; most suitable, that is, if one disregards the nightly visits of snakes and panthers. Clambering over rough boulders and jumping across streams, we made our way towards the caves as hastily as the uncertain route permitted. Having crossed the constantly winding little river Baghora for about the fourth or fifth time, we arrived at the foot of the ancient stone staircase which leads to the caves.

The Japanese artists always used the ancient ascent to the caves rather than the modern short cut, which leads from the eastern side, somewhat steeply to cave 1, the most recently constructed of all the caves.

After ascending some hundred of these worn and broken stairs we came to the cave marked 7, the numeral glaringly conspicuous in black paint on a white square, just a soulless identification mark, quite inappropriate to either the age or nature of the caves. About thirty years or so ago the official surveyors had numbered the caves concurrently from east to west, like houses or shops in a street.

The artists now all scattered into different caves; but I followed the leading artist, my friend Araisan, who was copying a great piece of fresco for his country, The Temptation of Buddha, in cave 1. We passed caves 6, 5, and so on till we came to 1, when suddenly he took off his topi and stood reverently in front of the intensely dark entrance. Instead of going straight to the Buddha at the far end, he walked slowly up the left aisle, gazing at the frescoes high up on the walls; and, having come at last to the altar, he bowed many times to the large cross-legged Buddha, and afterwards took off his puttees, and by undoing his sash let down his long white robes, so that now he looked like an artist-monk.

All this time we had been seeing one another like ghosts in the subdued light, but suddenly Araisan said: "Now light," and began to pump air into a great big cylinder which was connected with a hanging lamp on a tall three-legged stand. He lit this lamp, and I joined in pumping for half-an-hour or so, in order to get a bright flame. So gradually the great Buddha became visible, and as the flame brightened I saw the fresco Araisan was copying.

I was stunned but extremely happy when I first saw the paintings, for I felt that they had been done with the utmost care, and yet, I thought hereafter I would be able to cover similarly large pieces of walls by myself, in the same way. I actually fell in love with many; in fact with all of the paintings on the walls, especially some of the beautiful paintings of the most lovely women.

Over the fresco of the famous Buddha's Temptation that Araisan was copying hung four or five pieces of thin Japanese paper, which later on he would join together. For a little while I watched him, then stole away, eager to see the other wonders.

Wandering from cave to cave, I found myself in an ancient world of Buddhist palaces, temples and halls. The walls, ceilings and columns were covered with wonderful paintings and decorations. The idea of natural caves disappeared from my mind altogether; and it was beyond my comprehension to have imagined their grandeur, unless I had seen them for myself.

There are twenty-nine cave temples in all, hewn out of solid pieces of living rock, which have now become the home of wild beasts and bats. These marvellous temples and monasteries date probably from a little before the reign of the great Buddhist Emperor of India, Asoka (272-231 B.C.), to just before the expulsion of Buddhism from India, about 600 A.D. to 700 A.D.

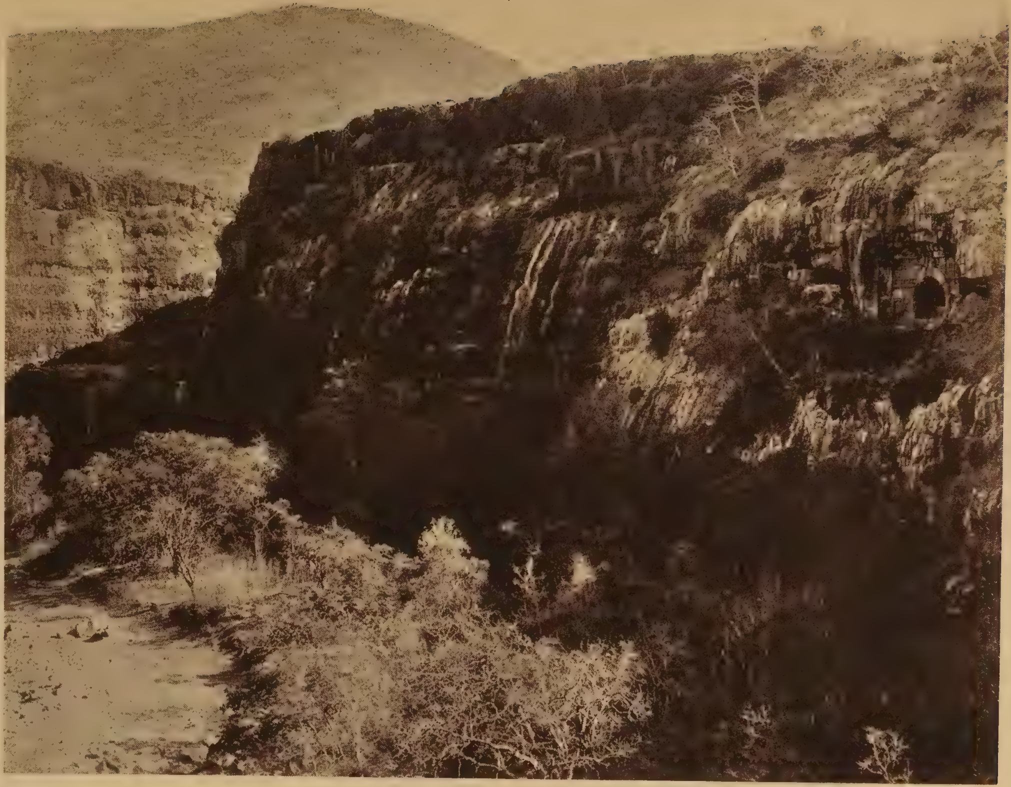
They were visited by generations of pious travellers and pilgrims eager for knowledge, who came not only from Persia, Greece and Asia Minor, but from far-off China; travellers, such as Heuen Tsang, Fa-Heen and others, came there to study the way, to learn the life and teaching of Gautama Buddha, as well as to enrich the temples with their precious gifts.

In these twenty-nine caves at Ajanta, are four completed chaitya chapels, numbers 9, 10, 19 and 26; and one, 28, was begun but never finished. "Chaitya" means the buildings used by Buddhist monks for united worship. A dome-shaped Buddhist shrine, called "stupa," containing relics, occupies the place of the altar in all the four chaityas at Ajanta, and it is the most sacred of all.

The remaining twenty-five are biharas. "Bihara" means a Buddhist monastery. Each of these consists of a central hall with small cells opening into it and a great sanctuary on its longest side, just opposite the main door entrance, with pillared aisles, nave, baranda and cells. This sanctuary contains a colossal Buddha. Seven of the rock-cut temples at Ajanta were never finished; they are numbered 3, 14, 23, 24, 27, 28 and 29.

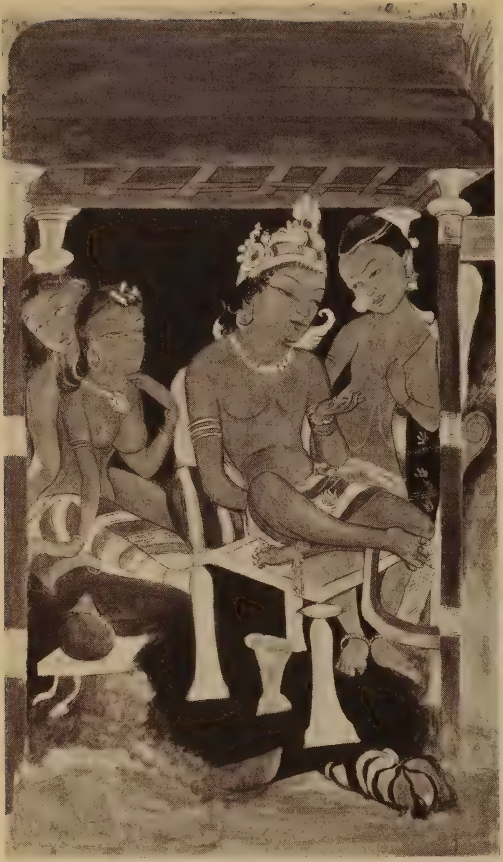
About the time of Asoka, between the third and second century B.C., the first two caves were excavated, 10 and 9. These were worshipping chapels. But living quarters were needed for the priests, monks and students, and so the caves 7, 8, 11, 12 and 13 were cut out gradually afterwards, and this is the way the monastery was first built up.

The scenery everywhere round about here is most wild and beautiful. From the baranda (veranda) of cave 17, you can look down upon the river bed, which curves away to the waterfalls at the extreme end of the right-hand corner of the caves, and in the monsoon becomes a mighty torrent. It runs from the head of the valley above the caves and terminates abruptly in a waterfall of seven leaps, the last may be of from 70 to 80 feet. The place is known locally as Sat-kund, or the seven pools, these receive the several falls, the lowest is a small deep lake and full of fish.

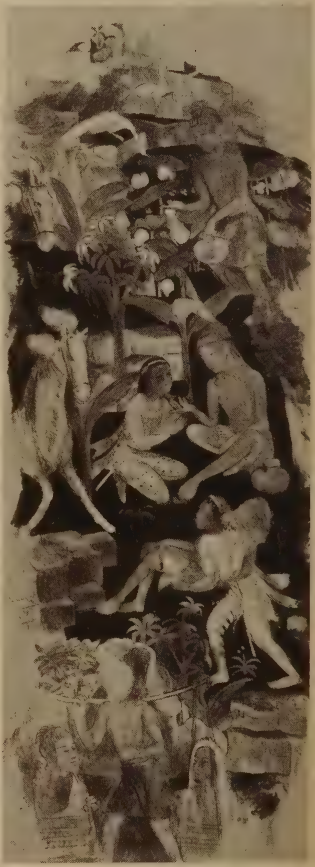


THE AJANTA GORGE.

Showing Cave 26.



KING BIMBISARA, HIS QUEEN, AND ATTENDANTS SEATED WITHIN A PALACE PAVILION.
Cave 17.



JATAKA SCENE, WITH HORSEMAN, YOGI, ETC.
Cave 17.

By permission of the India Society.

In the evening I went back to the bungalow with my Japanese friend for the night's rest. But for days I continued under the spell of this magical scenery and magical art.

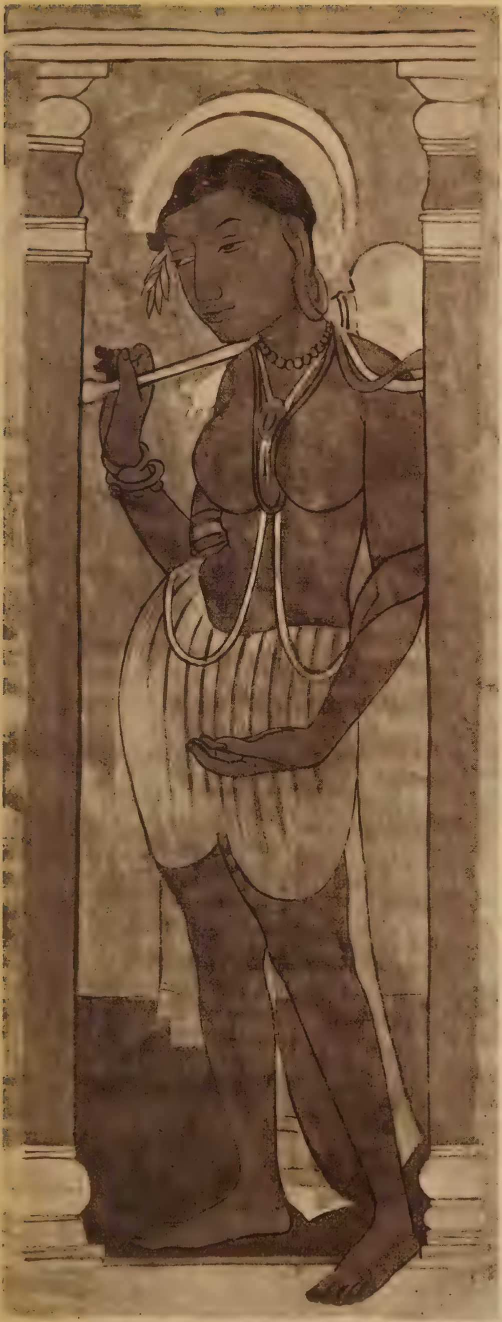
It is impossible for anyone who has not seen them with his own eyes to realise how great and *solid* the paintings in the caves are; how wonderful in their simplicity and religious fervour; yet almost all are suffering from many kinds of damage, apart from the inevitable decay produced by some thousand years of neglect. Numerous kinds of animals and birds make their home in these caves; bats, owls, swallows, wild bees, and even wild parrots and pigeons, which continually drop their lime over the walls on the paintings. Human beings, civilised and uncivilised, such as Sadhus and Sanyasis, have cooked their meals and made their fires in the caves, till the smoke has blackened their walls. Visitors have scratched and scribbled their names, and European visitors have cut away pieces of the frescoes or tried to do so. An interesting fragment of fresco, about a foot square, showing portions of various figures, probably part of a Jataka scene from cave 16, dating from about the fifth century A.D., was removed and brought to England by the late Captain Williams of Hampstead;

and, a few years ago was put up for auction at Sotheby's sale rooms in New Bond Street, where it fetched £1,000. It is now in the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, U.S.A. It is sad to see how the frescoes have been damaged; the disfiguring marks of penknives are all too visible. From time to time British official artists who were engaged in copying the frescoes, varnished them with the very cheapest kind of varnish, and as a result the paintings have grown blacker day by day almost to the point of a dead black and ruination; for when the varnish dried up the plaster on the walls cracked, and the outer films of the paintings peeled off. Further, on every inch of the wall-paintings divers kinds of insects have made their habitation and bitten the paint and plaster.

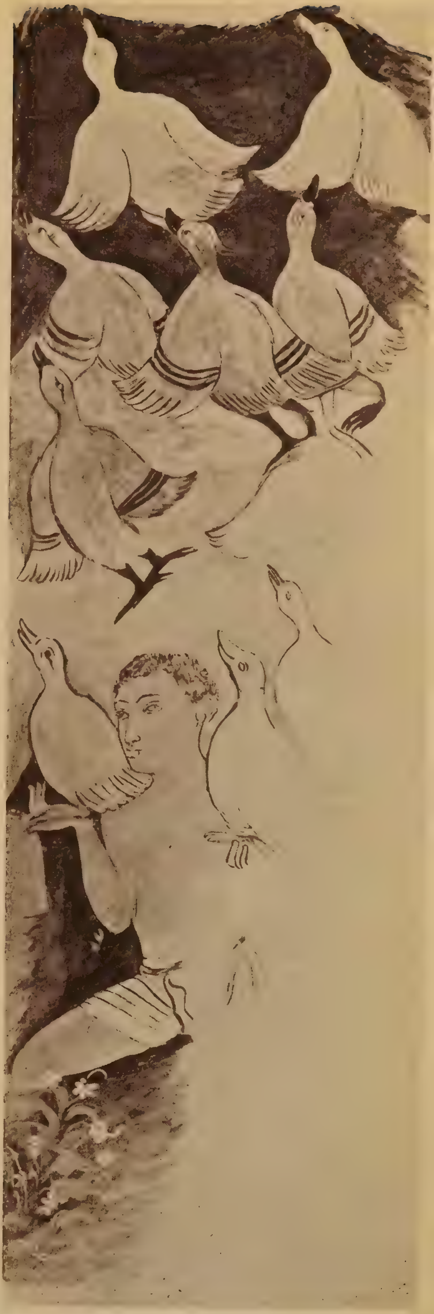
From about eight or nine o'clock in the morning until evening I found these Japanese artists keenly absorbed in making the most faithful records of the frescoes for their country, and Prof. Sawamura busily engaged in taking photographs and plans. He also took thousands of impressions of the carvings and decorative designs on the columns and pillars, on specially made thin paper, which was damped and pressed down on the carved designs by a soft dabber, and black ink dabbed on the surface of the paper. I helped him at this work many times as a token of my appreciation of his and his friends' kind hospitality. Now I hear from Prof. Sawamura, who is in London, that all the copies of Ajanta paintings they made have been destroyed in the last earthquake in Japan except his own collection of carving-impressions ; and also he told me that he is contemplating another visit to the Ajanta caves in a few years' time, for a long stay.

The halls and monasteries and chapels were made for the purpose of great Buddhist universities and monasteries where pilgrims and scholars might study Art, Religion and Philosophy ; and they served as dwelling-places for monks and guests, who came from far distant lands, such as North-West Asia and China, to study and worship there. The pictures and sculptures adorning them are all connected with, and illustrate Buddha's life and previous incarnation from stories in Jataka tales.

These Japanese artists, who were Buddhists, were so devoted in copying what they saw and so engrossed in their task that I never heard them murmur a word while they were at work, and I was very sorry I was not able to start working myself; but I had not yet obtained permission from the Nizam's Government to copy the frescoes. After seeing these wonderful paintings and noting how eagerly the Japanese artists were making faithful copies for their country, and how their Government and art patrons had equipped them, I could not help thinking what a great pity it was that the British Government or wealthy Indians took no interest whatever in educating their countrymen by getting these paintings copied for their museums, art schools and colleges, and other educational establishments in India. Unfortunately, these marvellous groups of caves, being in the Mahomedan territory, were overlooked until very recently. Probably in the near future we shall have to go to England, Japan, America or elsewhere to see our own ancient art instead of being able, as one should be, to study it at home in India; for so quickly is it becoming ruined, that we shall lose it all sooner or later; or should a great earthquake happen, we should lose it quicker still. I made up my mind, therefore, that I certainly must copy some of these glorious things before they were all gone. I soon realised, however, that it was a big and very difficult task to fulfil, and, as I had discovered, one in which no one was likely to help me. So with this idea I made up my mind to earn sufficient money to carry out my



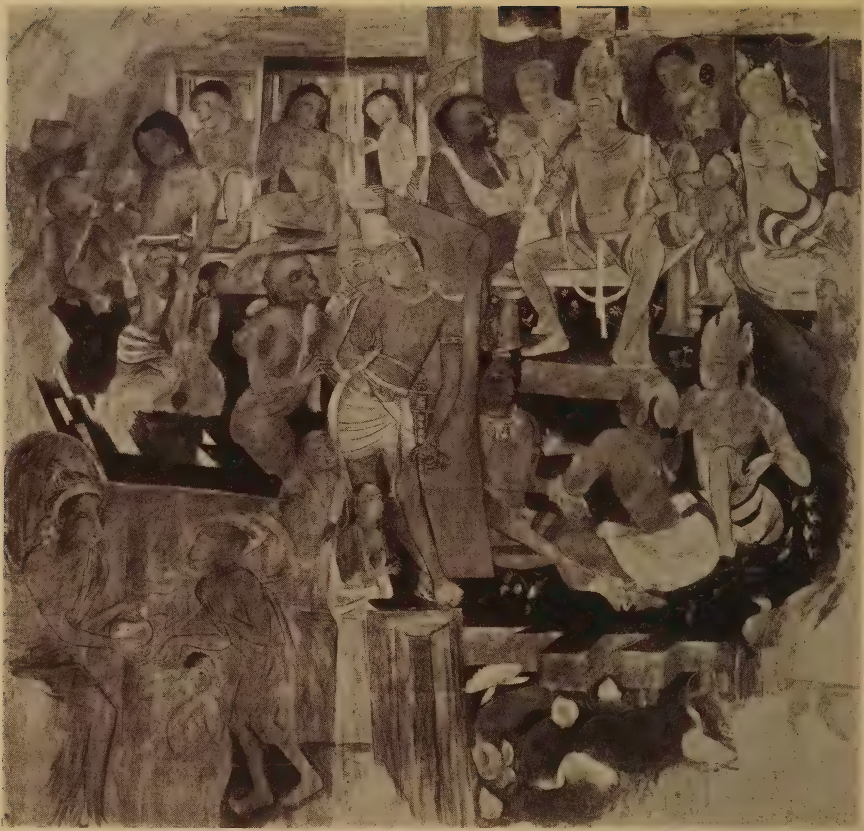
A GIRL WITH A FLY-FLAPPER.



A HUNTER AND WILD GEESE.

CAVE 17.

By permission of the India Society.



BEGGING SCENE.
CAVE 17.

By permission of the India Society.

scheme, and to come back to the caves again for a long stay in order to copy the frescoes myself.

With these ideas in my head I bade "Sayonara," Good-bye, to my Japanese friends and left the Ajanta caves and the Fardapur village.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIFE OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

For the next two years I travelled over the greater part of India, studying ancient art and monuments in the Buddhist caves and temples, at the same time supporting myself by making portrait sketches and selling my other drawings. I visited Bodh-Gaya, where Buddha received enlightenment beneath the old bo-tree.

"IN THE SHADE OF THE BOKUL-TREE"

Gradually the whole history of his most noble and wonderful life became again vividly present to my mind; as when in my childhood I had sat in the shade of the bokul-tree at the feet of my Gurudeba, Dr. Sir Rabindranath Tagore, in Shantiniketan School, and first heard the life story of the young prince Sidhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha.

As the frescoes are incidents in the life of Buddha, I give here an account of him, his life and work.

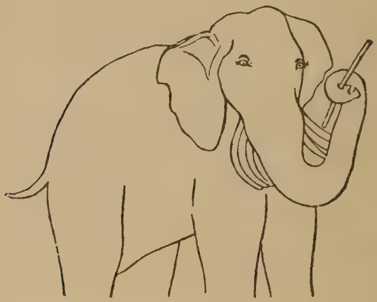
In the northern part of India, at the foot of the Himalaya mountains, on the borders of Nepal, is a land of great beauty. The mighty snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas towered over the ancient capital of Kapilabastu, which derived its name from an aged sage, Kapil Muni, who lived outside the city in the shade of an old banyan tree.

Southwards below the city on the lower plains stretched green fields of rice, sandal woods and mango groves, from the midst of which rose the banners and towers of the temples, whose priests filled the air from morning to night with the murmur of worship and chanting.

These plains were rich and fertile, and irrigated by continual streams of melted snow, which poured down the mountain sides. The air, tempered by a fresh north breeze, was ever cool and pleasant.

Between the mountains and the ricefields lay the city of Kapilabastu, of which only some old ruined foundations remain, belonging to the chief palace of the Shakya Kings. There is, however, little else than foundations, for ancient Indian buildings consisted only of blocks of stone and wood covered with clay and plaster, and were not strong enough to endure for centuries.

In Kapilabastu, about the sixth century B.C. lived the King Shudhodhana, strong of purpose and reverenced by all men. His wife was Maya Debi, beautiful as the moon and pure as the heart of a water-lily, but alas, they had no child. This was a great sorrow to the King and Queen, who desired above all things a little son.



THE SIX-TUSKED ELEPHANT (CAVE 10)

One night, however, the Queen, grieving over her childlessness, fell asleep, and dreamt a dream of a six-tusked white elephant which entered her womb. She told this dream to the King, her husband, who called around him his wise men. To his intense joy they predicted that Queen Maya would shortly bear a son, who would either become a mighty monarch, or a great and perfectly enlightened Teacher in the world. However, the King wished that this long-desired son should be a monarch, the heir to his throne, the inheritor of his kingdom, and that he should add glory and lustre to the name of his father.

Queen Maya was filled with joy. The desire of her life was fulfilled. She would have a child, and she greatly longed that he should be born at her old home, which was not far away from her palace. Nothing was too good for the mother of this longed-for little son. So the King's consent was soon obtained, and Queen Maya set out for the home of her parents.

She travelled in state as befitted a great Queen. Hundreds of servants, escorts of soldiers, litters for her Court ladies, and in the midst Queen Maya herself in a gorgeous, golden State palanquin, sparkling with jewels and mounted on the back of a beautiful white elephant.

It was high summer in the land. The blazing sunshine poured down on the royal procession, and even the Queen in all the luxury of her golden palanquin felt discomfort. In the distance rose the cool grove of the famous Lumbini Gardens, and here the Queen would rest.

She descended from her seat to stroll through its shadowy glades. Many kinds of wonderful trees were there, with exquisite flowers, and rich perfume, but the most beautiful of all was the asoka, with its wide-spreading boughs, and its thick green leaves and bud-covered branches which bent down and touched the ground.

Attracted to this gentle shade, Queen Maya and her maidens advanced, and the brilliant sunshine faded into gloom. Her hour had come. She stretched out her hand to one of the scarlet-blossomed branches for support, and from her right side above her waist came forth her infant son.

The wonderful news spread, and to the cradle of the child hastened chiefs to pay their homage, scattering before him beautiful flowers and presents.

Among those who came to see the royal babe was a Brahman, named Asita, famed for wisdom and scholarship, and for the interpretation of signs; but on beholding the child he wept, and said: " I am old and shall not live to see the glory of the Almighty One. For thy son will rule the world and will deliver all who are caught in the net of ignorance and folly." The king was pleased, and named his little son Sidhartha, which means "He who has fulfilled his desire."

The king gave orders that none but the young and fair should come near the child. The little prince was brought up with the greatest care and lived in the beautiful palace surrounded by lovely gardens and enclosed in a great park. He had for teachers the wisest men in his father's kingdom. His least desire was granted, if not anticipated, and he was surrounded by playmates selected from all the noblest families of the State. But he was never boisterous in disposition and did not care much for noisy games. He liked better to wander about the beautiful gardens by himself. Everyone in the palace noticed how calm, quiet and thoughtful was his disposition, in spite of all the gaiety of his surroundings.

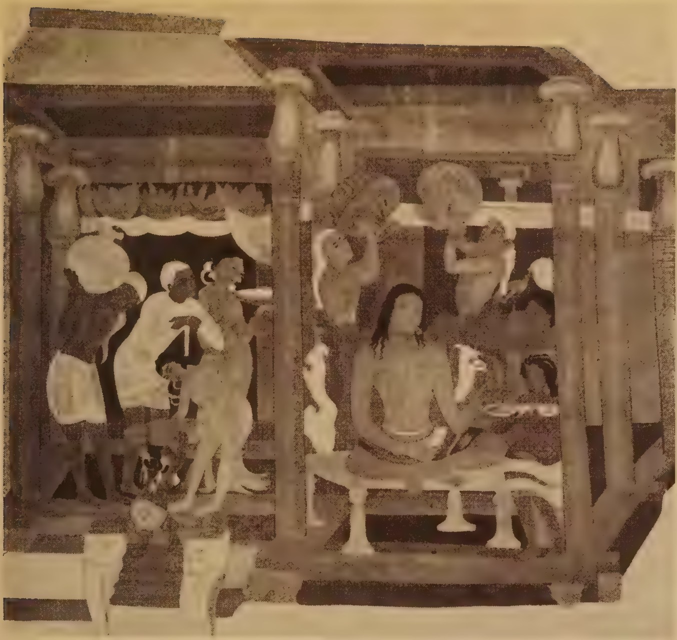
There were temples inside the palace, where the priests chanted, and the king, queen and their subjects came to worship. Sacrifices took place there, which all the boys enjoyed seeing; they shouted their delight when the victim died; but not so the little prince. On ceremonial and other occasions there was feasting and drinking after the temple ritual was ended, but from this also the young prince refrained, preferring his own thoughts.

One afternoon, while he sat quietly under a bower in the garden, a duck fell from above at the Prince's feet. After taking it up, he found a bleeding sore with an arrow sticking in the bird's breast. Shocked with grief at seeing so much suffering, he extracted the arrow and bound up the sore. His cousin, Debadatta, ran up to him and asked for the bird, as he had shot it, but Sidhartha would not give it up to him, saying that it belonged not to him who had tried to take its life, but to him who had saved it.

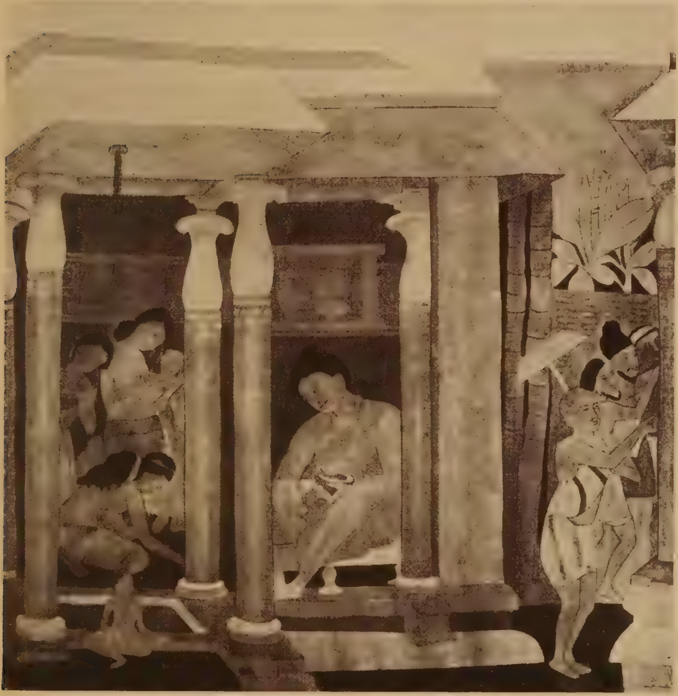
When the Prince grew up his father built for him three palaces, where he dwelt at different seasons of the year. Each was of the utmost luxury, and hundreds of beautiful dancing girls were appointed for his entertainment. Then at the age of twenty the king wished his son to marry. In this way he hoped to attach him to a worldly life.

A great feast was arranged, to which were invited all the young nobles who had sisters, so that Gautama could see and choose for himself. And amongst the fairest there was the Prince's cousin, Yashodhara.

On the last day of the revels Gautama dis-



PRINCE GAUTAMA BATHING IN HIS PALACE.



WOMEN WORSHIPPING BUDDHA.

Cave I.

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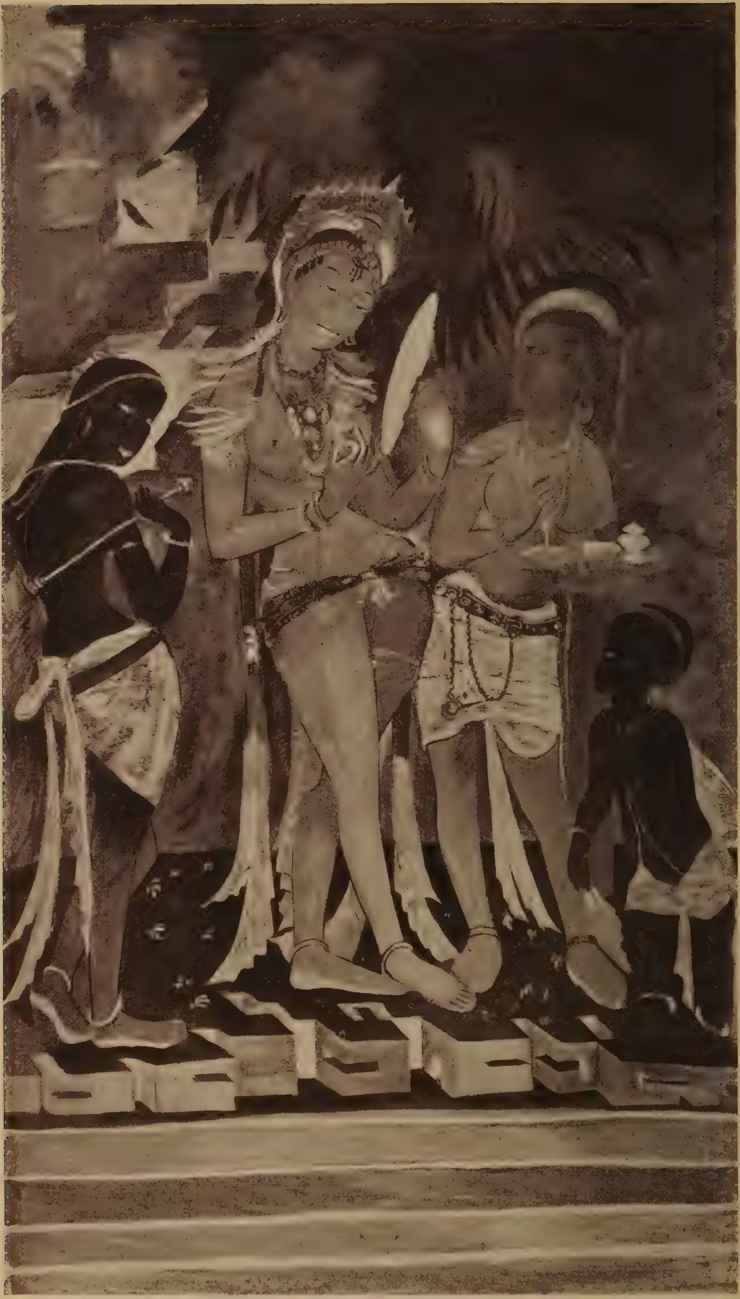


THE TOILET OF A QUEEN.

CAVE 17.

By permission of the India Society.

tributed jewels as mementoes amongst his departing guests. Yashodhara came last, and there was nothing left for her, but Gautama took from his neck the garland of flowers and placed it round her, choosing her for his bride.

But Yashodhara's father did not wish a daughter of his to marry one who was not a warrior and Gautama hearing this proclaimed a contest. To the tournament came all the bravest warriors, all the most skilful marksmen and all the finest wrestlers in the kingdom. With these the Prince would compete and exhibit his prowess. His relatives feared for him. " How," said they, " will you be able to hit the quickly turning boar, you who have always refused to aim at any living thing ?" Gautama only laughed, and on the day he outstripped everyone and carried off all the prizes. Thus he won the beautiful Princess Yashodhara, and the wedding was celebrated with the utmost magnificence.

All was now prospering, and the King felt that his son was safely settled in a worldly life.

His father had laid out for him a beautiful garden, which was situated on the other side of the city. This garden was so lovely that it was called the Garden of Happiness. Great trees threw shade all round, and there were masses of flowers, scarlet, purple and white, fountains in marble basins, and in the midst a wonderful pavilion for rest during the heat of the day. The king felt sure that if his son once saw this garden he would be content and wish for nothing further, so he ordained that the Prince should visit it.

A proclamation was issued, commanding that the streets of the city through which the royal procession would pass should be gorgeously decorated. Flags and banners were hung from the windows, and none but the young and fair were to be seen in the streets, and through this gay scene the Prince was to pass in his royal chariot to visit the marvellous garden.

The magnificent cavalcade set forth and all went well until, at the corner of a street the Prince saw creeping slowly along the pathetic figure of an old and decrepit man, who humbly begged for alms from the joyous crowd.

" What kind of man is this ?" asked the Prince, seeing for the first time in his life poverty-stricken age.

" Sire," answered his charioteer, " it is an aged man bowed down by years."

" Are all men, then, or this man only," said the Prince, " subject to age ?" And there was only one reply : " All men, O Prince !"

All pleasure in the wondrous garden was

quenched by this reply. Of what avail such transient pleasures if the end for all was what he had just witnessed. Sadly the Prince turned homewards, reflecting deeply on the decay of life.

Next day, the Prince drove forth again, and by the roadside lay a sick man in terrible agony. Never before had Gautama seen sickness of any sort, and he was stricken with horror to hear in answer to his enquiry, that all men were subject to be seized at any time with diseases and maladies such as had overtaken the unhappy sufferer before him. Once more the cavalcade returned without having seen the Garden of Delights.

A third day was fixed for the visit, but again it was thwarted. A funeral procession descended the beflagged and decorated street with a lifeless body in its midst. Flowers and garlands were strewn over the corpse, and the followers, who were bowed with grief, cried out from time to time, "Call on the Lord," as they proceeded. Once more the Prince sought an explanation of his charioteer, and learned that this was Death, the last and greatest enemy of man, who comes to high and low alike, and from whom there is no escape. He who begins life must also end it.

In silent and sorrowful meditation the young Prince drove home, and the treasures of his palace were as nothing to him, for now he knew they were only his for a time, and that the fate of those unhappy men whom he had seen would surely and inevitably be his.

On the fourth day another sight met the Prince's eyes. Along the road came a man clad in mean garments and carrying a beggar's bowl, but serene, dignified and self-controlled. How could one apparently so poor have attained to such peace and content? Who was he? The charioteer, Channa, was appealed to, and answered: "My lord, he is a religious man. He has abandoned all longings, controlled all passion, suffers no envy, and begs his daily food."

A light dawned on Gautama. Not in riches, power, luxury and wealth lay the secret of Life, but in renunciation, poverty, self-control and meditation.

The rumour of his son's adventures reached the ears of the king. In spite of his strict orders, the Prince had become acquainted with Age, Disease and Death. Useless to issue orders for the punishment of those who had thus shown themselves; they were nowhere to be found. The blow he dreaded was falling, and his son tending more and more to the life of the Teacher—and beggar!

He summoned his Prime Minister and redoubled his precautions. Triple walls were built round his palace. More guards were mounted. The kingdom was ransacked for more and more beautiful dancing girls, who were commanded never to cease from efforts to divert the Prince's mind with music and pleasure. Even his devoted wife, Yashodhara, was troubled and suffered many things in her dreams.

But the three terrible sights which he had seen had sunk far too deeply into the heart of the Prince to be eradicated by material pleasures. Old Age, Disease, and lastly Death would inevitably come, and the more he reflected on these things the more trivial and unworthy appeared to him the life of heedless pleasure which was apparently his lot. He could hardly eat or sleep, but wandered round his gorgeous palace day and night, searching for a solution of the terrible problem which confronted him. All who are born must die, and all who die must be reborn. There was neither beginning nor end to the Wheel of Life.

It was midnight, and for Gautama there was no rest. All the evening had been given over to revelry, sweet music and playing, while beautiful maidens had danced their most alluring dances in the hope of rousing in their royal master some sign of interest. Outside a glorious moon flooded the gardens with light, and wearied with the revels, the Prince arose and went into the garden, seeking in the silence of the night an answer for his riddle. He sat down beneath a great jambu tree, and to him there seemed to come a light and the knowledge of the Way of Peace.

For a time Sidhartha reflected on the wonderful revelation, then he arose and slowly re-entered his palace. He traversed the marble courts bathed in silver moonlight and silent now save for the tinkling of the fountains, and into the great hall, where the dancing girls were lying, wrapped in deepest slumber, their musical instruments beside them. There they lay, just as they had sunk down to rest, careless of their appearance, dishevelled in their clothing, and looking to his sad mind very like lifeless bodies. For him not only had they ceased to be attractive, but they were even repulsive, and he marvelled how a man could succumb to passion if he were not seduced by dress, jewels and artificial allurements.

Silently he left the hall. He must flee the palace; but how? Guards were everywhere, and the Prince, though nominally free, was virtually imprisoned by his father. He sought his faithful charioteer, Channa. "Channa!

arise and saddle my horse quickly and quietly. We must go hence!" And while Channa went for the horse Sidhartha stole away to take one more look at his wife and little son.

In the midst of the gay assembly the Princess Yashodhara lay sweetly sleeping on her bed, strewn thick with the sweet-scented jasmine flowers, her newly born son in her arms. The Prince yearned to take the tiny child in his arms for a last kiss, but feared to awaken the mother, so with tears in his eyes he took a last fond look, bent down and kissed his wife's foot. Then he silently drew the silken curtains and left the chamber.

In the palace courtyard stood the great horse ready saddled, with Channa, the faithful charioteer, awaiting the arrival of the Master. Silently he mounted, stole through the great gates of the palace, past the sleeping guards, gained the high road, and then urged on the horse at topmost speed.

As the dawn broke they reached and forded the river Anoma. When he arrived at the farther bank the Prince dismounted and told his faithful follower that the time had now come for them to part. One by one he divested himself of his gorgeous jewels and his princely robes, until nothing remained but the fine white muslin under-garments. Then from the woods appeared a hunter bearing in his hands the russet robes of a hermit. The Prince took these, clad himself in them, and handing his fine muslins to Channa disappeared into the forest.

Sadly Channa turned homewards, weeping and wailing, and leading Kantaka to the city of Kapilabastu with a great load of sorrow, and Sidhartha tarried in the forest alone.

For seven long years he dwelt there in the forest searching for the way of escape from those three terrible woes. He searched in many places where he hoped to obtain peace and knowledge from higher powers. No penance was too hard for him to perform, no fast too severe for him to endure. He reduced his food to the smallest quantity sufficient to support life, subjected himself to the most rigorous self-discipline and at last became so weak that he fainted and lay on the ground as if dead. But still the longed-for Enlightenment tarried.

Attracted by the story of his mortifications and the rigour of his life, five wandering hermits attached themselves to the Holy Man and became his first disciples. The fame of his holiness had now spread throughout the surrounding country, and pilgrims flocked to receive his blessing.

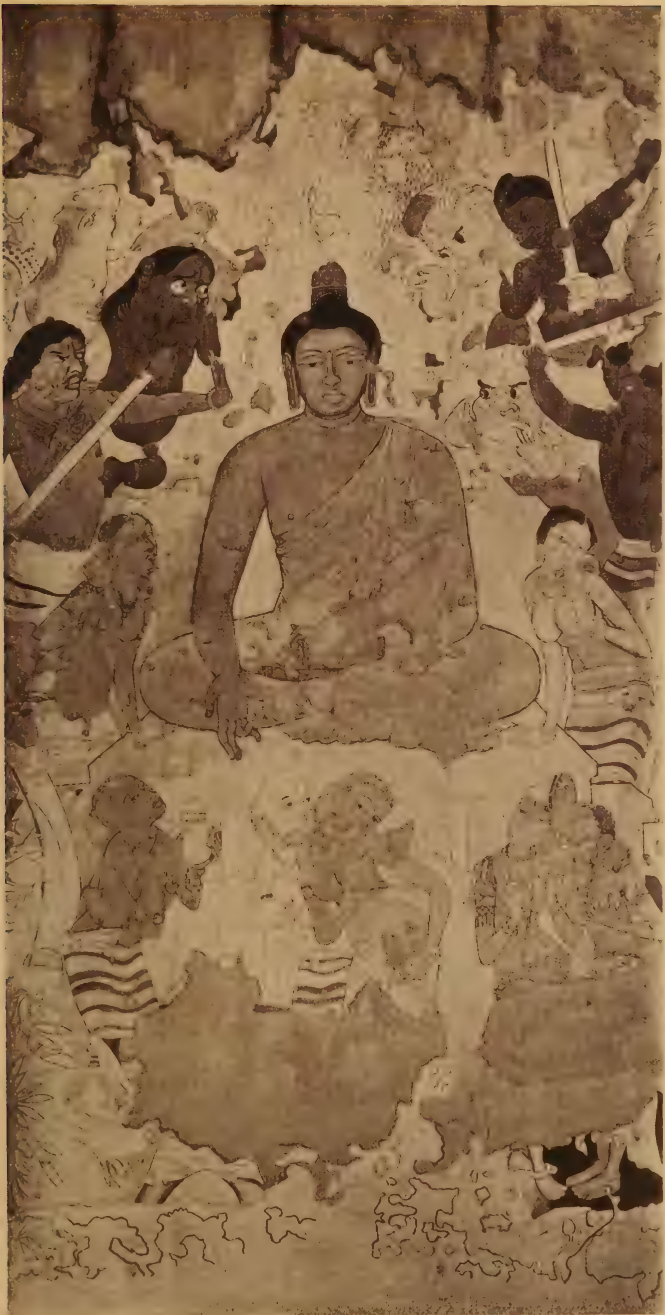
Seated under an old bo-tree by the Niranjana river, now the Falgu, he still meditated on the great Secret, and made the firm resolution that until he had attained it he would not move from the place.

And that night it came. He received the Light, and it grew clear to him that mortifications and fasts and all the terrible austerities to which he had subjected his body were unavailing; he knew now that it was the inward thirst for life which was the cause of all the evil in the world. Could men but rid themselves of all desire, then they would be happy, and the three great woes would be conquered. This freedom was Nirvana, and the life of struggle towards it he called the Way of Peace. So he attained the great Enlightenment and became Buddha.

A flood of Peace filled his mind. Now he would be able to show mankind the path of Righteousness, and the sorrows of Life would be vanquished. Rising, he went down into the river to bathe and refresh himself with the cool water. After bathing he found that he had not strength enough to raise himself out of the water, so weak had he become through his long fasts. Espying the branch of an overhanging tree, he grasped it and with its aid reached the bank, where he sank down as if dead. Now, a beautiful maiden, who was the daughter of the head-man of a village near-by, woke up long, long before dawn, feeling uneasy. Something urged her to go with food to Lord Buddha. From her father's great herd of cows she chose the finest black one, and cooked rice with its milk with great devotion. Then long before the sun was up, the morning dew still upon each blade of grass, she carried this food on her head to the thin, frail, fair figure lying on the ground under the old bo-tree. Being too weak to murmur a word, Buddha ate the sweet rice, got strength and blessed her.

But Mara the Evil One viewed the Enlightenment of the Holy Man with hatred. He determined to overthrow him, so assembling all his demon hosts and mounting his terrible War Elephant, he advanced against the Tree of Wisdom, where sat Buddha surrounded by the hosts of Heaven. So terrible was the sight of the Evil One that all fled, leaving Buddha alone.

Then their leader advanced, disguised as a messenger and bearing a letter from the princes of his old home, imploring him to come to their assistance, for great calamities had befallen them. Debadatta had usurped the throne, cast his old father into prison, and held as captives his dear wife and only son. But Buddha, in

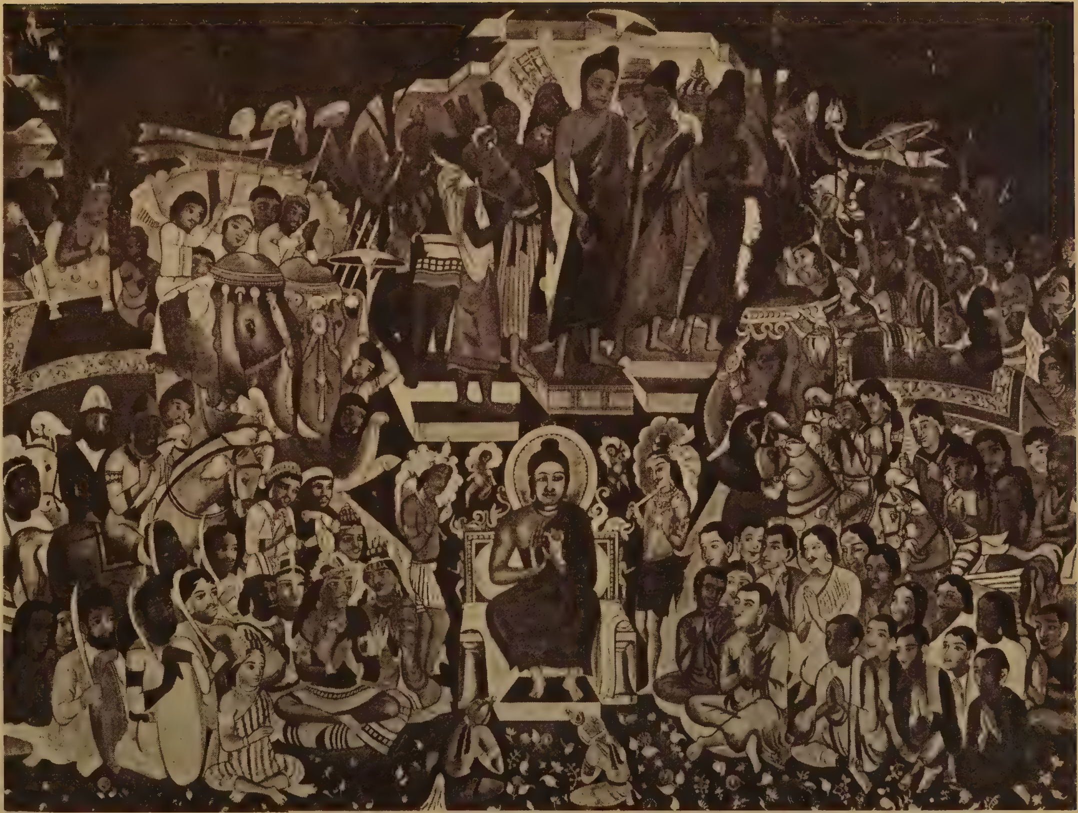


THE TEMPTATION OF BUDDHA.

Cave I.

(See page 185.)

From a copy in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esq., Bombay.



BUDDHA TEACHING.

Cave 17.

spite of this dreadful news, was not to be turned from his high purpose. Then came forward Mara's three beautiful daughters, and they used all their arts to tempt the Holy Man: they danced before him, offering him the lordship of the world, but as they approached him they were turned into hideous hags. Mara was now enraged at the failure of all his devices to tempt the Buddha from his Chosen Path, and rallying his evil troops hurled them at the Saint. A terrific thunderstorm accompanied by a violent whirlwind burst upon him, and deadly poisoned weapons, burning coals and scorching sand filled the air around him, accompanied by a fearful darkness; but lo, all was of no avail, for the fierce thunderbolts changed into lotus blooms which fell harmlessly and carpeted the ground, while perfumes filled the air, and in the glory that burst forth Mara and his evil hosts fled away discomfited.

For seven weeks longer Buddha remained in his old position under the bo-tree, meditating on the glories of Nirvana, and then he arose, left the forest, and went forth into the world once more, to spread abroad the good tidings of the Way of Peace.

He first came to Benares, for it was there that the five wanderers lived who had been his former disciples. They saw him approaching them and determined they would pay him no reverence but merely show him those courtesies which were owing to his human birth. But Buddha divined their intention and met them with such overwhelming love that they were ashamed, and rising paid him all the honour and reverence that was due to their Master.

When they were seated he unfolded to them his first doctrines and instructed them, and they received and practised his precepts with such eagerness and assiduity that at the end of a week they themselves were filled with the Divine Fire, and set forth to carry his Message to the world.

In the Deer Park at Benares Buddha preached his first great sermon, the fame of which spread all over India, till it presently reached the ears of the old King Suddhodana, who, realising that this wonderful preacher was the Prince his son, sent messengers desiring that the Holy One should visit him. And on receiving his message Buddha sent word that he was returning home.

It was during the cold season that the Holy One, accompanied by a great number of disciples, set forth for Kapilabastu. The spring was in the land, the grass was green, birds were singing, and the road on either side was bordered with trees laden with gorgeous scarlet blossoms.

When he neared the city the whole populace came out to greet him with flowers in their hands to scatter in his path; the great nobles with their ladies and an escort of soldiers assembled to give a royal reception to the son of their king; but walking slowly through the crowd, and gathering alms with his little mendicant's bowl came a humble beggar, clad in tattered yellow garments, in whom, to their amazement, they recognised the Prince. Through the gates of the city he came, passed up the crowded streets, and amidst the acclamations of the multitudes entered the gate of the palace. The princess who was told of this entry reported it to the king, who at once went out to remonstrate with his son, saying that to appear as a beggar was to put the royal family to shame. "Not one of all our ancestors ever begged his bread," said the king. "But my ancestry is that of the Buddhas," replied his son, "and every one of them lived upon alms." Upon this the old king was converted, and taking his son's begging bowl in his hand, conducted him with every honour into the palace.

Then he visited the rooms of his wife, Yashodhara, who had not come with the rest of the family to greet him, for she wished to welcome him alone in his own part of the palace and without any onlookers. As soon as she saw him she fell at his feet and did homage to him. Then he saw that she too had tried to follow her beloved husband on the Path of Peace. No longer was she wearing the rich robes and jewels of a princess, but was clad in a plain russet garment and had worn the same sad clothing ever since his departure.

But the Buddha had not yet seen his little son. So on the morrow his mother dressed him in his most gorgeous robes and splendid jewels, and sent him to ask his father for his inheritance, telling the boy that his father possessed great mines of wealth which should be his by right.

The boy hesitated at first, for he had known no father save the old king, but his mother, taking him to the window, pointed out the Buddha who was then passing through the gate. The boy went straight to him and asked him frankly for his inheritance. The Buddha gazed at him for a moment and then turning to one of his disciples said to him, "Give!" And Yashodhara knew that her husband would receive the boy amongst his disciples. So Rahula, too, received the yellow robe.

The time had come for Buddha to leave his home once more, and this time he would take with him his little son.

Gautama's teaching now began to spread, and thousands of converts were made, including the king, rich men, Brahmins, and a great number of householders. The Master now set out for Rajagriha, and halted for a little while at the mango grove of Anupia. It was here that a great number of the Shakya princes followed him to join his disciples, among whom were his two cousins—Ananda, who became his personal attendant, and Debadatta, who was not fond of him.

BUDDHA TEACHING (CAVE 16)

Another great convert was Anathapinda, a very wealthy merchant, who hearing of his fame gave a great sum of money to the Order, and begged the Master to visit his home. Then all along the road which stretched between Rajagriha and Srabasthi, the merchant's home, he caused to be built at every league a resting-place, and at the end of the journey he bought, for as much gold as would cover the ground, a beautiful grove, in which he erected a wonderful house for the Master and his disciples, with fine halls, wide terraces and beautiful water-tanks, with cells around it for the eighty disciples. When Buddha saw it, Anathapinda asked him what he should do with it, to which Buddha replied that it should be bestowed on the Order. Then the merchant took a golden vessel of water, and from it poured some into the Master's hand, in this way confirming the gift.

There were round this beautiful monastery cloisters, surrounded by lotus-pools, fragrant mango trees and slender fan palms, with banyan trees, whose roots dropping from the branches bury themselves and form new stems, so making whole shady groves and leafy walks from one tree.

There was also another famous grove—the Bamboo Grove, given by King Bimbisara, in which place Buddha passed the first year of his ministry. The next three rainy seasons were spent in the Bamboo Grove at Rajagriha. There it was he taught that the offering of righteousness was better than that of material sacrifices, and he championed the beasts of the field, whom men so thoughtlessly and wantonly torture and slay. He was ever on the side of compassion and mercy.

That the Sangha (the colony of his disciples) grew so rapidly was certainly not due to the ease of the life Gautama offered men. We get many glimpses of their austerity as they slept on the bare earth with no covering but the yellow robe: "Cold, Master, is the winter night; the time of frost is coming; rough is the ground with the treading of the hoofs of cattle; thin is the couch of leaves, and light is the yellow robe; the winter wind blows keen," said a dweller in Alavi as he saw the Teacher seated in the midst of the Sinsapa Forest absorbed in meditation.

Amongst his converts were a great number of princesses, accustomed only to walk upon smooth marble and to be protected from the heat of the sun and the violence of the wind, who set out to walk on foot to the hermitage where Buddha was residing. They then joined the Order and carried out its rules with great devotion. After this Buddha showed that the time had come to establish a proper order of nuns.

The ministry of Buddha was not entirely unopposed. Not only were the Brahmins often his great opponents, but some of the powerful kings, who from countless past births had been his enemies. Buddha, however, knowing of their enmity, always spoke well of them, and occasionally preached to them, and finally prevailed by means of his great patience and forbearance.

At the close of the wet season Master and disciples would mingle once more with the busy throng of men. The day was most carefully planned. Rising at dawn, Gautama would go out either alone or with his followers to village or town collecting alms. He would then break his fast, and would discourse to the monks, and give them exercises in meditation suited to their attainments. They would then leave him, going off each to his favourite spot to meditate, whilst Gautama would lie down on his right side "in the lion posture" in a quiet chamber, or, better still, in the cool shade of the forest and rest—not sleeping, yet not practising systematic meditation. Then the people would come to him for preaching and advice. When he had taken pity on them he would bathe and spend a period in meditation in the cool of the evening. And in the first watch of the night he would answer the questions of the disciples or preach to them.

" While his discussions with the learned," says a disciple, " were more or less formal and often coldly logical, in his conversation with ordinary men the Master generally resorted to similes and parables, fables and folk-lore, historical anecdotes and episodes, proverbs and popular sayings." His similes and parables are drawn for the most part from the jungle—the spoor of elephants, the ways of woodmen, the life of trees—or from the village: herdsman, farmer, fletcher, charioteer, all provide him with images, whilst the current folk-lore of his day was converted to religious purposes. The great things of nature, too—the " patient earth," the wonderful moon, the sun in his splendour, the majestic rivers—these supplied him with a wealth of imagery.

It is said of him that when asked by a farmer why he did not work for his living, he answered by the charming Parable of the Sower, in which Gautama claims that he, too, is a farmer, and that he sows seed whose crop is ambrosia; which of course led to the farmer's conversion. As Sariputta remarked, " It is by similes that men come often to understanding."

Though a reformed one, Buddha was brought up and lived and died a Hindu. The success of his system was due to his wonderful personality, his sweet reasonableness, his courageous and constant insistence upon a few fundamental principles, and the way he made his teaching accessible to all, high or low.

Suffering is caused by craving of a wrong sort; to get rid of this craving we must busy ourselves with right moral conduct.

The teaching of the first Buddhist missionaries was eagerly welcomed, and though it found acceptance at first chiefly amongst the nobility, it was at heart a democratic movement into which Brahmins, kings, warriors, cultivators, and men and women of low caste and of no caste, were equally welcomed.

Hither would come to him kings and their retinues, and other lay people, or Brahmins and religious teachers who had heard of his fame; and on moonlight nights when the air is fragrant with the blossoms of flowering trees and solemn with the march of the stars, they would sit enthralled by his discourse on the eternal verities.

At other times his disciples might be seen pacing with downcast eyes amongst the villages of Magadha and Kosala, giving in return for their daily food the teaching of the Law, which we are reminded again and again is " the greatest of gifts."

To this strange assembly of men and women Gautama gave fully and without reserve his philosophical and moral teachings, and it was to them he entrusted the handing on of the torch when he passed away.

So Ananda was appointed, and for twenty-five years was Gautama's " faithful shadow," combining the duties of pupil, body-servant and chaplain with admirable devotion.

As Buddha was wandering alone he came to the " house of the potter " at Rajagriha. The old man, Pukkusati, had been a king, and a friend of Bimbisara: perhaps the two kings and the physician Jivaka had been fellow-students at the great university. Gautama asked a night's shelter at the potter's house. He was told that a friar of noble birth was already within, but was allowed to share the hospitality of the house; and the two old men sat meditating, till Gautama, noting the serenity of his companion, asked him why he had left the world and who was his teacher. Pukkusati replied that it was the Shakyamuni whom he followed. Gautama did not make himself known at once, but began to expound the Dhamma, till Pukkusati cried out with joy, "I have found the Master whom I sought!" So sure was Gautama's touch on human hearts and minds. "More potent than his method and his word was the Blessed One's wonderful personality. When he talked with men his serene look inspired them with awe and reverence, and his lovely voice struck them with rapture and amazement. To have come under his spell is to be his for ever. His heart always overflowed with kindness. To meet him was to be penetrated by his love and to know him was to love him for ever."

Buddha had been suffering from a severe illness and had declared that he would not live much longer. Whilst staying in the city of Pawa he was invited to a meal by a blacksmith named Chunda. To do honour to Buddha the smith killed a pig and roast pork was the principal dish offered to the Exalted Visitor. Buddha became very faint, and though he set out for Kushinagara, had to rest many times on the way. At last he reached the city and said to Ananda: "Inform the smith, Chunda, that his offering will bring a great reward, for it will be the immediate cause of my attaining Nirvana." Buddha said this, lest Chunda should feel remorse or others might blame him, but he gave strict orders that the remainder of the offering was to be buried. Then he lay down on a couch in a grove of blossoming sal-trees near Kushinagara, on the bank of the river Hiranyavati (probably now the Gandak), sending a message to inform the Malwa princes of his arrival. Thus a great company of nobles, princes, priests and ladies of the court assembled around the Buddha's death-bed. None of his disciples was more stricken with grief than Ananda, to whom Buddha left instructions about his burial and the continuance of the Rule. When Ananda wept bitterly the dying Buddha comforted him, saying that he had done well, and that if he persevered he too would win freedom, and he prophesied that the very least of those present should at last prevail and reach Nirvana. Shortly after this he passed away into the infinite peace of Nirvana—which ended the long cycle of his early lives; and the Malwa princes wrapped his body in fold upon fold of finest cloth, and for six days it lay in state. On the seventh day it was burnt on a magnificent pyre in the coronation hall of the Princes, and the body was entirely consumed, leaving only the relics like a heap of pearls, of which the chief, enshrined in glorious monuments, were the four teeth, the two cheek-bones and the skull.

CHAPTER FOUR

MY SECOND VISIT TO AJANTA

By the middle of the year 1919, my portrait-drawing had enabled me to save over two hundred pounds, wherewith to buy the necessary materials for a prolonged stay in the jungle, including camping kit and stores. I decided to take with me as little as possible, and set off with a cot, medicine box, tinned food, water filter, petrol lamps, tins of petrol, rolls of drawing and tracing papers, ladders, large and small drawing boards, and one or two other requisites for life in the open. I had one servant with me as companion and cook. So the greater expedition began, and early in June I left Calcutta for the second time in order to study in the caves, well aware by this time of the great value of my prospective studies.

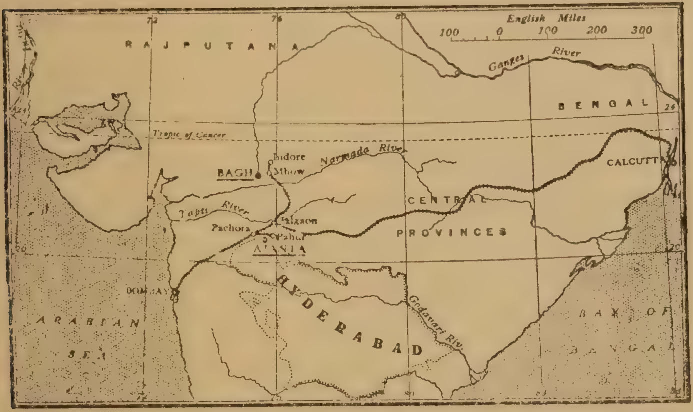
On this occasion I did not leave the train at Jalgaon, but proceeded a little farther, to a station called Pachora, on the main line of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, two hundred and thirty miles from the west coast of Bombay.

Since my last visit I was glad to find that a narrow-gauge railway, running north-east through Khandesh in the valley of the river Tapti, from

Pachora Junction to Jamner, had been opened, and that the nearest point to the Ajanta caves was Pahur station, twenty-five miles from the junction.

On arriving at Pachora, very late at night, I had to wait until morning for the train to Pahur.

Being this time a second-class passenger, I was allowed to occupy, at once, the second-class compartment of the narrow-gauge railway. The compartment stood in the fields some distance from the station. In the dark a number of coolies carried my luggage, and we went forthwith to the carriage for the night's rest, instead of remaining in the waiting room at the station.



MAP OF CENTRAL INDIA, SHOWING AJANTA AND BAGH

My servant, Narayan, soon made beds for us both, and we tried to go to sleep till daybreak. In the village some little distance away we heard the sounds of music, with drums and flutes, songs and dances, and also saw through the window of the carriage the glowing light of torches in the distance, piercing the starry darkness. It was impossible for me to sleep, so I set off to see what festivity was on foot, leaving Narayan behind with the things in the compartment.

I found that an Indian Jatra performance was taking place under a gigantic banyan tree, in an open field by the side of the village. In the middle of a great crowd a youth, dressed up as a girl, danced and sang with considerable grace. Most of the listeners sat on the ground, and a great many torches were hung from the branches of the tree. The young lady in the middle seemed to be singing of her joys and sorrows; and, what appeared to be a choir of about twenty persons chanted the refrain to the accompaniment of drums, flutes and other instruments. It was a kind of Marathi language, which it was beyond my capacity to understand; and as the dance was but a monotonous repetition, it did not amuse me to stay very long.

Soon the dawn broke through the eastern sky, and the cocks began to crow. The dogs howled in the village; the lamps were already out and the people astir. As I came near the station I saw a small hut, and near by a large crowd had assembled. I found that it was a little sweet-shop, inside which travellers were conversing affectionately with the bearded proprietor, to whom they referred as their "mama," or uncle. The old shopkeeper was frying jilebies (a favourite Indian sweetmeat) and serving them hot to his eager and hungry customers. I joined the crowd, and having secured a portion of the delicacy, carried it back to the train to eat with Narayan on the journey to Pahur.

There were hardly any passengers on this line, and there was only one second-class carriage in the train, with three or four third-class carriages joined together. My drawing boards were too big to go in the van, but I explained fully to the guard the importance of conveying them, and they were finally carried with both doors of the van open, and a man in charge of the luggage inside.

In the morning at eight our train left Pachora Junction, but soon halted again to take up a stout little gentleman who came hurrying along. He was dressed in khaki knicker-bockers and puttees, and wore a solar topi. He came into my compartment and was also bound for Pahur.

Our train finally left the junction for Pahur, from which the caves are only a distance of about fifteen miles to the south.

The gentleman who had so nearly missed the train was a railway engineer or surveyor, and he asked the guard to join us in the carriage. Amongst other luggage he had a double-barrelled gun, and as we travelled through the cotton fields we saw numbers of buck and deer feeding in the fields. My fellow passenger became quite excited, and asked the guard to stop the train in order that he might shoot some of them. The train stopped in the middle of the fields and the hunter got down and made towards the herds of deer; but after a few unsuccessful shots the game scattered, and he was obliged to return to the train which was ready to start without him. He was much disappointed and showed a long face.

Having passed Sindorni station, we arrived at Pahur soon after ten o'clock the same morning, and I felt that at last I had reached the threshold of my undertaking.

I was disappointed to find no bullock-cart to carry my things to the caves, though I had previously sent word to Ajanta and to the station-master of Pahur. Pahur, being the last big village in the British territory, there is a post office, dak bungalow and police outpost. Here through the help of a police official and of the village head-man, Patel, I was able to find two bullock carts and one cart-driver. This was no easy task at Pahur during the cotton season, as the people worked long hours in the fields, and earned more money than by driving carts.

My servant Narayan was anything but a skilful driver, so I took the place of the absent driver, and we started off in the forenoon to go to Fardapur, which was only about ten miles away.

The bullocks in these parts are almost wild, and they are hard to drive, especially without their proper masters. I found this out to my cost, for as we descended a slope near the bank of the River Baghora, the cart ran off the road and collided with the boulders in mid-stream. A wheel came off, and a tin of oil burst open and floated with the current. I saw it was no good attempting to drive these wild animals any farther, so I left Narayan behind with the cart and the luggage till the real driver should come from the fields, and started for the caves myself with the remaining cart.

On my way to Fardapur, I saw on the left, many people and carts gathered together in the bare fields, by the side of a tiny village called Vakod. It was a bright sunny afternoon when I reached this village, and I was told that a bazaar was being held that particular day, this being a weekly event. I was glad to buy some provisions, such as a few vegetables, potatoes, bringals, onions, a little goat's meat and some rice. This is the last boundary village of the British Government in this part, and I found there was here also a small branch post office in a little low mud house.

Fardapur, which we approached towards dusk, is a small village of great antiquity, and the remains of the Mogul fort is now used as a rest-house, called Caravansarai, which was probably built at the time of King Aurenzeb. This village being the first border village in the Nizam's territory, the Mohammedan rulers fortified it against invasion from the north by the construction of several forts.

The river Baghora, issuing from the Ajanta caves, runs through the Fardapur village; the inhabitants wash and bathe in it, and drink the water. The bullocks, buffaloes, and in fact all cattle, also drink and lie in this stream, and in the summer there is very little water. In the monsoon, or rainy season, the water gets very dirty and muddy, and I was glad that I had not forgotten to bring a filter with me. The population in the Fardapur village is not more than about three hundred or four hundred, consisting of Hindus and Mussulmans, some of whom are occupied in cultivating cotton and maize; others are labourers, blacksmiths, shoemakers or washermen. Unfortunately an ugly little cotton mill has recently been erected on the roadside, near the Fardapur village, and this greatly spoils the picturesque aspect of what would otherwise be a wild and romantic spot.

By the evening I arrived at the travellers' bungalow, and occupied the room where I previously stayed with my Japanese friends, but this time I was alone. Narayan arrived a little later with the cart and the rest of the luggage, and we began preparations for the evening meal.

We were soon faced with many difficulties. Water had to be fetched from the river, which was a good distance away. There was wood to be gathered; and provisions, such as milk and eggs, had to be bought and carried from the village.

Next morning, when I saw the curator of the caves, who lived at the old Sarai at Fardapur, I asked him about the letters and telegrams which I had previously sent. He said he had not received them, and asked me for the permit to copy the frescoes, which I showed him. However, in spite of all the difficulties, I was able to settle down to begin my work, and I went to and from the caves every day.

At this travellers' bungalow at Fardapur anyone can stay, by paying a hali-rupee per day (which is much lower in price than the British Indian rupee, value about thirteen annas), provided that there is a room or that it is not occupied by any of the Government officials. One has to take one's own bedding, food, cook and servants.

The situation was easier for me this time, as I knew my way to the caves, and had some preliminary knowledge from my previous visit of the treasures which they contained.

CHAPTER FIVE

I BEGIN MY WORK IN THE CAVES

In the course of the third century B.C. a few of the great Buddhist monks had a strong desire to form a Sangha—a colony for the worship of the Lord Buddha.

They searched eagerly for a retreat from the noisy world, and ultimately discovered a romantic, secluded spot in the gorge near Ajanta, where a few natural holes in the hillside suggested the possibility of carving out the rocky scarp to form temples, monastic halls, chapels and dormitories, where they could study the Buddhist culture in peace.

Soon the fame of this group of saintly men spread over the country and attracted good and learned people, the rich among whom helped to establish a proper university in this ravine, where Religion, Philosophy, Art, Ethics, and all higher things could be studied.

The nucleus of this ideal university was a chapel, which was exclusively devoted to ceremonial worship, and is now known as cave 10. It was cut out of a large piece of living rock in the sheer side of the cliff with infinite labour.

Before beginning my work at the caves I made a preliminary inspection of these ancient temples, so as to form an idea of how to proceed with my studies.

I decided to begin by copying the wall-paintings, starting with the most primitive and working gradually up to the highly-developed ones, in which way I should be better able to follow the different stages of this great school of Indian art.

The oldest group of caves at Ajanta lies in the middle of the crescent-shaped hill; and cave 10, with its great semi-circular arch and gate-window and the rest of this central group of six caves, were the first to be excavated, as the rock is at that point much smoother and more perpendicular than anywhere else, and the smooth surface extends almost to the bottom of the ravine.

Cave 10 is a large chaitya, or chapel of worship, and is the deepest and loftiest of all the caves at Ajanta. It looks from outside like a single great, open gate, and possesses no porch or specially made top window for light as in its companion on the right, chaitya cave 9. It measures ninety-five feet long by forty-one feet wide and thirty-six feet high, and was once fitted with gorgeous ornamental wooden ribs.

There are twenty-nine pillars surrounding the nave, all with plain octagons without bases or capitals, but once the whole of the cave was covered with very thin white plaster, and was painted at a very early period, probably from 350 to 200 B.C.

The triforium belt above the pillars has also been painted with figures, but scarcely any traces now remain.

In these early days the Buddhists' shrine did not contain any image, but was a plain, semicircular shaped dome, commonly called a dagoba, but technically known as a stupa, which was made of a huge mound of earth ornamented outside with bricks, terra-cotta and stone. A dome-shaped stupa is found in every chaitya cave at Ajanta. In this early cave it is perfectly plain and simple, with a lower base over fifteen feet in diameter. The square relic casket on the stupa in this cave was cut out of the rock and still retains its original form, but the wooden lotus-leaf canopy, which was on its top, and the wooden ribs which once adorned the roof, have now all perished. Innumerable nests of wild bees now hang down from the top of the cave front. Wild parrots, pigeons and bats fly in and out at free will. Within, despite the spaciousness, the air is terribly foul, but the light is fairly good.

There is an inscription on the front right hand top corner of this great chaitya cave 10. The characters are in very early Sanscrit type, rather large and crude. It reads, "Basathiputasa Kathadito ghara mukha danam," which means: "The gift of a house door front by Basathiputa."

Probably this cave was excavated by one of the ancient powerful Andhra kings, or a very rich merchant Basathiputa of this early period of the third century, B.C.

About thirty years ago there were some very fine fragments of paintings on the wall of this temple, but now they have all vanished. Varnish was applied to them by European officers who copied them from time to time. The object of the application of varnish was to bring out the colours, but the final effect has been that the fragments have gone completely black; whatever remained has been scribbled over by the visitors to the caves.

In this temple one can still just recognise, though they have been almost completely destroyed, the Jataka tales illustrating the story of the six-tusked elephant, stories of the previous incarnations of Buddha, and also many other Buddhist legends painted on the wall. As the story goes, the Bodhisatva (the previous birth name of Buddha) came to life as the chief elephant of a great herd of eight thousand, in the Himalayas. They dwelt near Lake Shadhubata in a golden cave, amid pools of white lilies, blue, white and red lotuses, and thickets of red paddy, fields of melons and of many other plants. Pure white was the chief elephant, with red feet and face and a trunk like a silver rope, and his name was Chadanta. He had two queens, Kulasuvada and Mahasuvada. Once whilst walking with his queens he struck a sal tree with his forehead and a shower of twigs and red ants fell upon Kulasuvada, but on her rival fell only flowers and pollen.

Later Mahasuvada imagined that Kulasuvada was his favourite wife, and cherished a grievance against him. She prayed to the gods that she might be reborn as a beautiful maiden and become the Queen of Benares, for she said to herself: "I shall be lovely in his eyes and then I shall do what I please. I will speak to the king and he shall send a hunter with a poisoned arrow to wound and slay the elephant and bring me a pair of his tusks which give forth six-coloured rays."

Thenceforth she took no food, and pining away, she died. The gods granted her prayer, and in due time she was reborn, became the Queen of Benares, and asked of her lord a boon, which she would not reveal until all the king's huntsmen were assembled. Then she proclaimed her wicked intention to capture the tusks of Chadanta. The chief hunter, Sonuta, whom she sent, took all needful implements with him, attired himself in the yellow robes of a holy man, and after travelling for seven years, shot the royal elephant with the poisoned arrow, but he was unable to cut off the tusks, although the elephant lay down and let him climb up his trunk. So the elephant himself with his trunk pulled them out and gave them to the hunter, who departed. But before the other elephants could reach him Chadanta had died.

So Sonuta returned, and when the tusks were brought to the queen, she cried: "Do you tell me he is dead?"

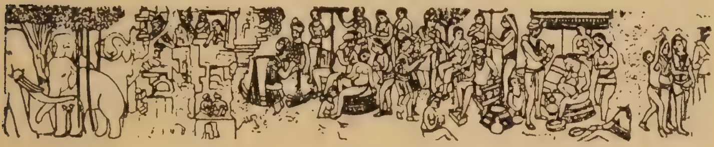
"Rest assured he is dead," was the answer.

She laid the tusks in her lap, and thinking that these were the tusks of one who in her former existence had been her dear lord, she was filled with so great a sorrow that she could not bear it; and then and there her heart broke, and she died the same day.

In a portion of the painting on the right wall is seen the hunter discharging his arrow, the huge six-tusked elephant lying down, and one hunter engaged in cutting off the six tusks, while another arranges them in a bamboo sling to carry them away.

In the upper drawing is shown a herd of elephants disporting themselves in the jungle amidst lotus-flowers, asoka and banyan trees, among them being the six-tusked elephant represented much larger than any of the others and white in colour. The body of this elephant is dotted all over with small brown spots, which give a realistic imitation of the texture of the hide.

In the lower drawing the hunter is seen on the left; he has reached the crest of the golden ridge and comes upon the huge elephant. Next, to the right, are a king and queen, seated on bamboo stools, most common even to-day in India, surrounded by their female attendants and two hunters, one carrying the six tusks hanging in a bamboo sling balanced across his shoulder. The queen at the sight of the tusks turns away and appears stricken with remorse, while the king and her maidens endeavour to console her.



FROM A WALL PAINTING IN CAVE 10

Farther to the right, the king and queen are seated on chairs which seem quite modern, and the two hunters with their hands in a suppliant attitude approach them. The king is addressing them, while the queen appears to wish to draw the king's attention to the pilgrim resting on his long stick on her right.

In the next scene the queen, seated once more on a circular stool, appears to be still grieving. The king stands in front, consoling her, while her maidens, two standing and one sitting, are listening to their conversation. Behind the queen is a couch or bed in a palace.

The next scene represents the king and queen with their maidens walking in the garden. One maiden is picking a fruit from a tree.

The painting to the right of this is entirely destroyed, but it is believed to have represented the death of the queen with a broken heart.

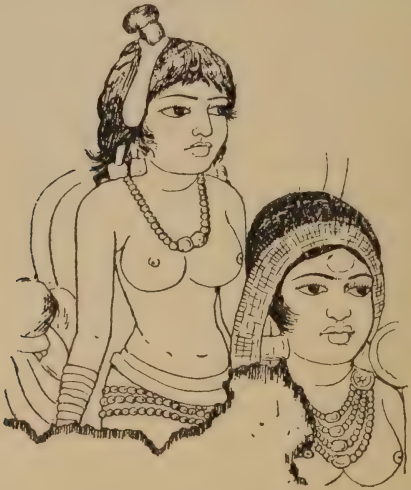
This story of the six-tusked elephant has been illustrated on the walls more than once at Ajanta, and in this case these early artists depicted it in narrative fashion, with a certain number of connecting links between the various episodes. The paintings here belong to the most primitive school of Buddhist art, and therefore I thought it the best place at which to start copying.

The ground upon which these early paintings were executed was a very thin white plaster, about the thickness of an egg-shell, on the smooth surface of the rock; it is smoother here than in any other of the caves of this series at Ajanta. Some of them face the open air and are exposed to the action of both sun and rain, and their sombre remains are also covered with innumerable names, dates, stains of varnish and other obstacles to preservation. The paintings on the east side of the octagonal pillars in this first cave, however, though much damaged by weather and scribbles are clearly visible. They represent Buddha standing upright in the act of preaching or of benediction. Some are just over a foot in size, while others are almost as large as life.

These paintings seem of a much later date than the paintings on the walls, and probably date as late as the fifth or sixth century A.D. The dark sweeping line of the drapery and of the hands, eyes and limbs is very interesting and of a vigorous and advanced technique, but the folds are drawn conventionally.

Some of these paintings have clearly been painted over the thin surface of fine early paintings. The paintings between the ribs of the aisles were also executed at a much later date, probably the third or fourth century A.D., about the same time as that of the paintings on the pillars.

But it is curious that about twenty fragments of more modern inscriptions, painted with dark brown or red colour, have been found in this cave, some painted over the older work on the walls, but most of them on the pillars. These inscriptions refer to the figures of Buddha. Now only a few fragments of lettering remain. Probably these figures were painted by the disciples of Buddha or the vikshus.



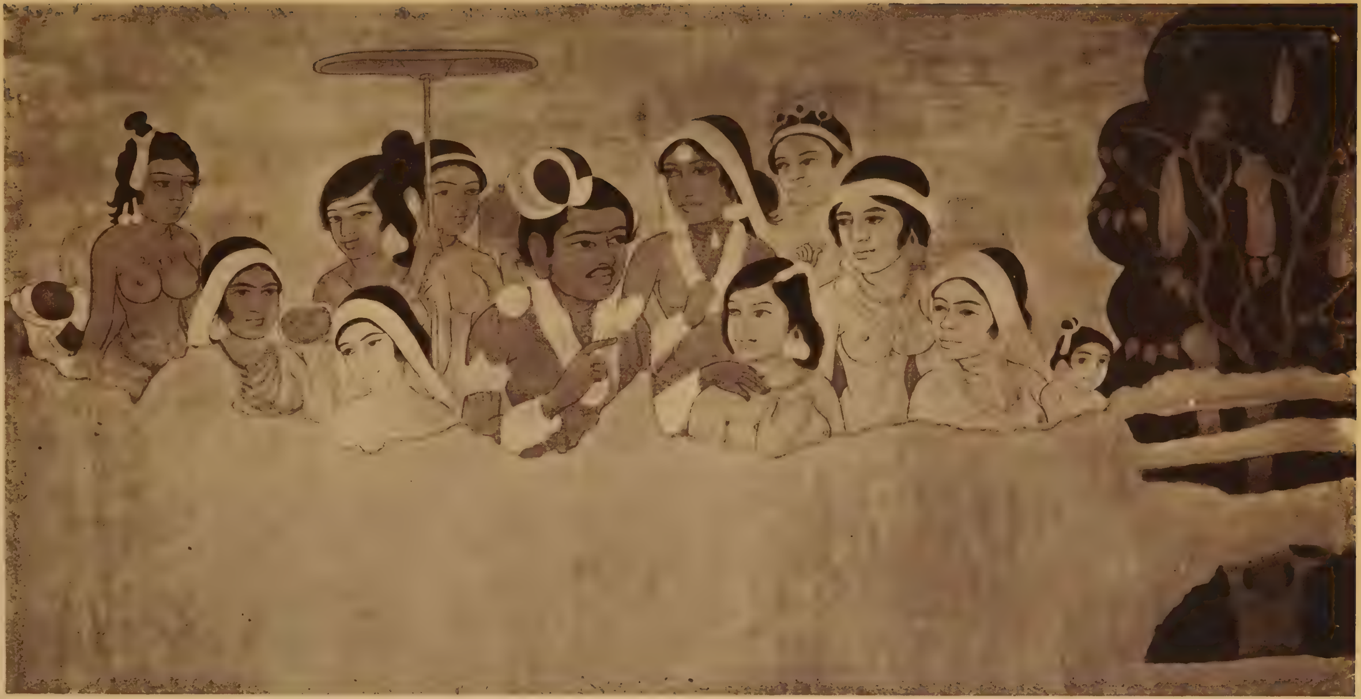
FIGURES FROM THE OLDEST PAINTING IN CAVE 10

I selected a portion of the frescoes on the left wall, which was visible in the daylight, for careful inspection, but first took my damp handkerchief and rubbed some of the dust from the surface. A miracle happened! Suddenly I saw a fragment of excellent drawing of a long almond shaped eye, a nose and eyebrows and so on, for a few seconds, but as soon as the moisture evaporated, the whole picture vanished.

I chose this piece from the wall to copy, and after having had a good look, I hung a sheet of tracing paper from the top of it, with adhesive beeswax serving as drawing-pins, so that the fresco was not touched. Standing on the step-ladder, I rolled up the tracing paper from the bottom with the left hand, looked at the drawing carefully, and tried to understand all the outlines bit by bit ; then slowly I unrolled the tracing paper down on the original painting and began to trace.

By tracing a portion at a time I discovered a most charming picture of a king, queen and princess, and women attendants, who formed part of a procession, two carrying relic caskets and some other object, and one with an umbrella borne over the casket and the king. The royal party are watching the sacred bodhi-tree hung with offerings, while on the other side are worshippers. Here also is depicted the hunting of a huge serpent by the side of a forest. Everyone, from the king to the little boy, is arrayed in jewelled robes, necklaces and arm-bands. The outline everywhere here is very sensitive, but strikingly strong and true ; and there is a shy realism throughout, notably in the delicate fingertips, the speaking eyes and the head and pearl ornaments. All this suggests that the long-forgotten artists of these early dates possessed a freshness of vision and a freedom from conventionality, and indicates that they were perhaps the moderns of their day.

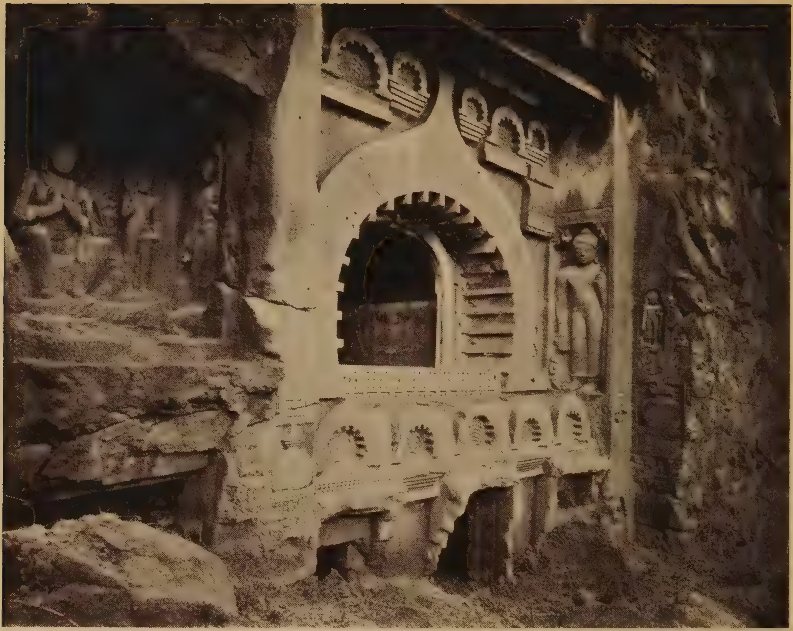
After the exact tracing was made from the wall, the drawing was first transferred to the painting paper stretched on the drawing board. Afterwards the outlines were accurately copied from the fresco, and then the colour was applied all over the paper like the original painting, and thus the copy was made. I am happy to say that this copy of mine found a home in the British Museum.



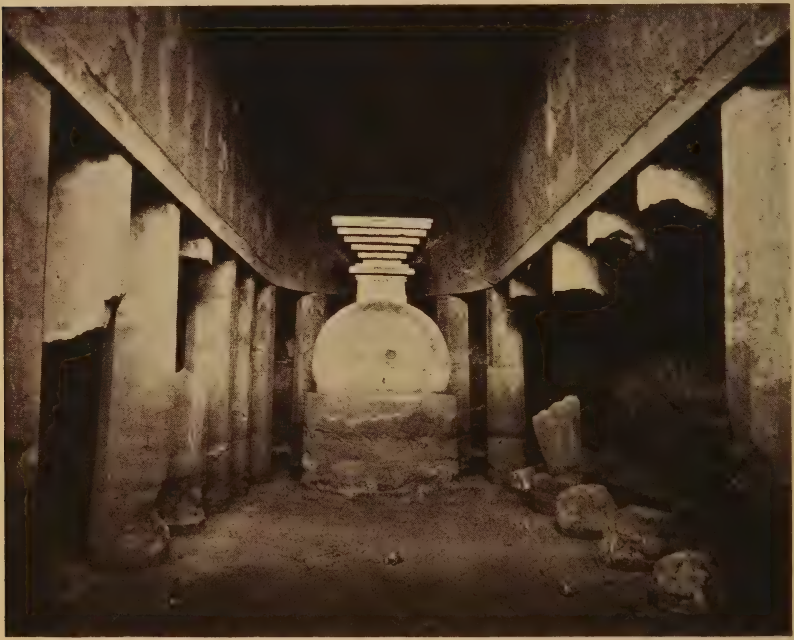
A KING, QUEEN, AND PRINCESS, WITH WOMEN ATTENDANTS.

Cave 10.

In the Oriental Department of the British Museum.



FAÇADE OF CAVE 9.



INTERIOR VIEW OF CAVE 9, WITH SACRED STUPA IN THE MIDDLE.

CHAPTER SIX

HOW THE CAVES WERE FIRST STARTED

WHEN the followers of Buddha had actually founded their university by cutting out of the rock a large chaitya, Number 10, other monks began to hear about the institution and came to Ajanta from various parts of India. Their patrons gave big donations, and the second cave was excavated —the second chapel for worship by the side of the mighty temple Number 10.

This new chaitya is now known as cave 9. In that early period of the Buddhist cult, between 200 and 300 B.C., people were more devoted to practical religion than to comfortable living in a bihara. The two graceful chaityas were made and became famous. The little group of Buddhists, or the Sangha as it is called, grew larger every day, and the silent air of the lonely wooded gorge was filled with prayers and chants.

Though this new temple is only about half the size of the neighbouring chaitya, 10, it is none the less most important. It is the lowest in position on the side of the cliff and the smallest in the series.

Over the front doorway there was cut a spacious opening, forming a window about twelve feet high, and admitting light into the interior of the cave. This window, in shape something like a lotus leaf, forms the upper part of the porch upon which it rests, and which separates it from the main entrance. It forms a great contrast to its other and earlier companion, Number 10, which is quite unique, in that the whole of the front is open.

The façade of this chaitya is covered with carvings of various Buddhas, stupas and horseshoe ornaments like that of the window, all of which are still in good condition. Though finely worked, the carvings are quite unobtrusive and in entire harmony with their surroundings. Recently the rubbish heaps and debris of broken stones which had accumulated in front of it have been cleared away, and a little stone wall has been made.

On the left-hand side, in a recess by the window, there is a most charming group of carvings, depicting Buddha, seated, and preaching to the assembled princes and monks, who are standing. This is balanced on the right-hand side by other figures of Buddha, both standing and sitting. All these sculptures were probably added at a later date, perhaps in the fourth or fifth centuries A.D.

From the outside it would seem that there had once been a great deal of woodwork in the front, which has all perished, but in the carved ornaments over the porch and everywhere else there would appear to have been much copying of the wooden structures. In olden days in India, palaces and great houses were as a rule made mainly of wood with huge beams and rafters; these being unsuited to the extremes of climate, heat, cold and torrential rains, have perished, but still in many parts of the land the Hindus love to live in gorgeously decorated wooden houses, so that these structures were meticulously copied in stone, which style is even now used by Northern Indians for palaces and temples. It is this sort of traditional form which we see exemplified in the chaitya caves 9 and 10, and in others too.

Though the light enters freely through the spacious window in this chapel, the interior is nevertheless dim.

This cave measures inside forty-five feet long by twenty-three feet wide, and is twenty-three feet high. Two rows of massive, plain octagonal columns without base or capital, joining in a semicircle at the end, divide the side aisles, and a huge stupa, seven feet in diameter, the chief object of worship in this sanctuary, is set in the rounded apse. The dome-shaped stupa stands on a plain cylindrical base about five feet high, resembling a magician's crystal. The dome itself is also about five feet high, and supports a carving resembling a reliquary, this having at one time been surmounted by a wooden canopy, now long since perished.

The side aisles are flat-roofed, and were once covered with decorative paintings of varied designs, of which now hardly a trace remains. In this cave, too, as in Number 10, the pillars are enriched with paintings of standing Buddhas, some of which are exceedingly beautiful. They are nearly as old as those in 10. Buddha, his head surrounded by a halo, is shown with disciples, worshippers, kings and queens, and snake kings with cobra hoods, together with traces of early types of buildings, stupas, and triple canopies—all most interesting, as depicting the earliest type of Indian life existing in Art. Unfortunately, the meaning of many of these paintings has not yet been discovered. The whole of the cave was once covered with a kind of white lime plaster, upon which the paintings were executed.

These pictures show us the peculiar way in which turbans were worn in those early days. They were interwoven with the wearer's long black hair and decorated with massive ornaments, and were worn in this way by both men and women. Perfect illustrations of the costumes and manners of those days are found in large numbers both in this cave and in Number 10.

The friezes along the tops of the pillars are most interesting. They show great vitality and movement, the cowherd running after his bulls, the tiger pursuing the cowherd, all perfect in design and highly finished in colouring; the children also are drawn very vivaciously. It is a great pity that no more of these marvellous paintings are now left.

HEAD DRAWING (CAVE 10)

In a great many places the upper layer of paint has fallen off, revealing underneath fragments of much earlier pictures, so it would seem that they have been painted one on the top of another. The reason for this we do not know, which is rather disappointing; but with careful examination we can still find the narratives of the Jataka tales in painting on the walls.

Numerous fragments of painted inscriptions—as many as sixteen—have been found in this cave. These, however, were not in a good state of preservation, so very little of them can be read, but they are of much later date than the paintings and might be the fifth or sixth century A.D.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CAVES—CONTINUED

On either side of the chaityas 9 and 10, on the hillside, were numerous caverns and recesses which had been occupied by holy men long before the days of Buddha. Gradually the earlier hermits died out and were succeeded in their rude cave-dwellings by the Buddhist monks.

By degrees the natural caves began to provide insufficient shelter for the increasing number of monks, and they started to enlarge the available space by cutting away the rock and made low stone benches and tiny cells all round for the high priests, each cell having two stone beds and a low doorway.

Very soon reports of the monks' hardships spread in the cities. The noble and rich people of that date made generous donations and the best professional masons and artists were employed to hew out temples and decorate the interiors with paintings. Out to the gorge came hundreds of craftsmen, labourers and artists, with paints, hammers and chisels, borne by processions of elephants, and a hubbub arose in the depths of the ravine at Ajanta. The simple monks themselves worked hard, side by side with the strangers who had been sent to help them.

Soon the monks' rough dwellings were transformed into monasteries that were gorgeous in comparison, and were embellished by marvellous paintings on their walls and ceilings.

These caves of the first group were not all completed at one time, as the monks, who loved peace, could not abide the noisy working men and the clamour of the building operations while they were living in the monasteries. It was only during the two seasons, the hot and the rainy, that the monks did not go out to the villages to preach and to beg their food. In the other more favourable seasons—about eight or nine months in the year—they and their disciples were scattered over various parts of the country, and only met together again for about three months. During the hot and wet seasons they were accustomed to take shelter at headquarters in these monasteries, to discuss schemes for various works of piety and charity in the next year.

During their absence as a body for eight or nine months, only a few old and venerable head priests kept charge of the place; and the excavations of the monasteries and temples had a proper chance to progress.

When two chaityas had been more or less completed, the monks turned their attention to some more of the surrounding caves for their own especial residences. The natural recesses to the right of chaitya 9 and the left of chaitya 10 were dealt with, and workmen were soon busy turning them into habitable places. The caves to the left of chaitya 10 were 11, 12 and 13; and on the right of chaitya 9 were 8 and 7.

So altogether five biharas, or monastery halls, were properly excavated, three on the left and two on the right of chaityas 9 and 10, forming the first group of seven caves at Ajanta. These were building during the two centuries which preceded the birth of Christ.

Number 12 is one of the oldest of the monasteries. It may be considered to cover a period from about three and a half centuries before the birth of Christ to 200 B.C., and it is probably about the same age as 9 and 10.

The front of this cave has fallen away with the baranda, and there now only remains a square hall thirty-eight feet each way, without any pillars or internal supports to the flat roof.

There are four cells on each of the three inner sides and, inside, eleven double beds and raised pillows to sleep on were cut in stone. There are marks of holes for pivot hinges in the sills and lintels of the doorway, and others in the jambs for fastenings, which shew that this cave was a large sleeping chamber or dormitory, and that the monks took sufficient precautions to keep out the tigers during the night, by closing the entrance and windows with wooden doors and shutters.

The upper portion of the walls above the cell doors is beautifully ornamented with the oldest type of canopy, somewhat like a horseshoe in shape, representing the chaitya window. This bihara no doubt was the first of all the early series to be properly finished.

The monastery is in a very ruined state and there is no trace of painting on the walls or ceiling; also, probably because it was a bihara of a very early type, no sculptures, paintings or images for worship were introduced in it. However, there is a short inscription in three lines to the left of one of the cell doors in the back wall, which reads: "The meritorious gift of a dwelling with cells and hall by the merchant Ghanamadada."

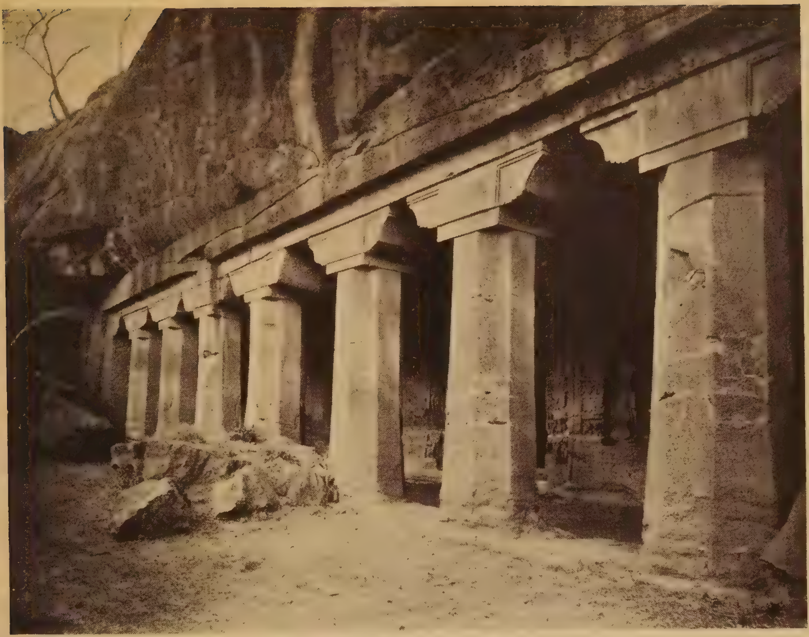
On the immediate left of bihara 12 is another ancient little bihara now known as 13, which also is entirely lacking in paintings. This was originally another natural hole in the hillside, and even now it looks very much like one from the outside. Like bihara 12, its front has completely fallen away. It was only a vikshu's room, or small residence of a holy man who lived here and whose sanctity may have attracted others to the spot. Later on this space was properly excavated into a plain hall, with polished walls but without pillars, of about fourteen feet wide by seventeen feet deep and only seven feet high. It has seven cells with stone beds, as in cave 12. How cool and pleasant it must have been to rest here on those stone beds in the dark during the bright, hot summer afternoons.

Then comes a very small bihara cave, 8, which must have been a natural cavern from very ancient times. It was built almost immediately on the completion of chaitya 9.

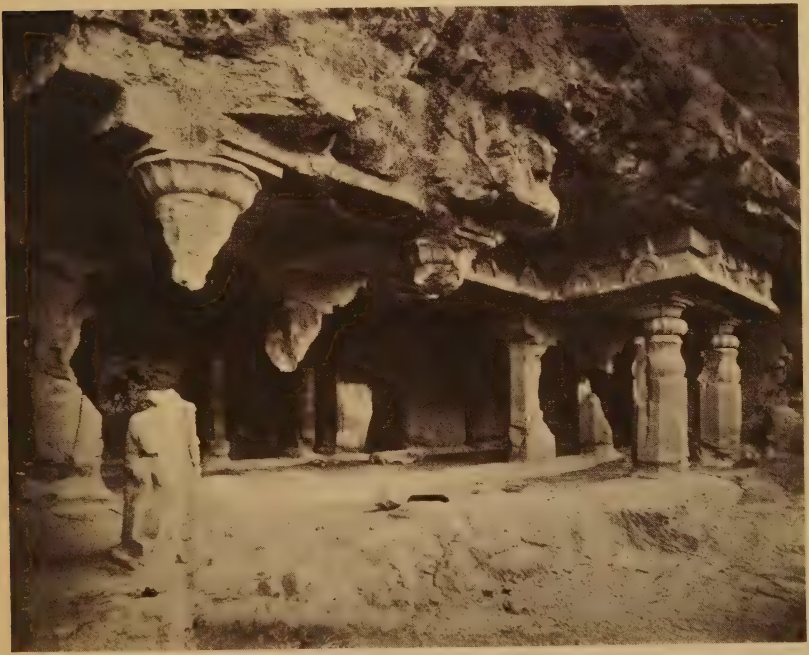
This monastery is the first one approaches when one mounts the ancient stairs from the stream at the bottom, and is situated at the lowest level in the hill. The whole of the front has fallen away and what remains is nothing but plain, bare rock. The hall is thirty-two feet long, seventeen feet wide, and only ten feet in height. There are two cells at each end and two on each side of the ante-chamber of the shrine. There is a low door leading to the dark ante-chamber in which is no image of any kind—nothing but a low stone bench at the back.

The largest natural cavern in this series, on the right of cave 8, was also turned into a good bihara, and is now known as 7. On approaching this monastery one can see that there are two porches, each supported by octagonal pillars surmounted with lotus-flower capitals, and in spite of its porches being much damaged, it still looks beautiful. It was probably then left more or less incomplete, as in its natural state it was quite large and comfortable, but was finished at a much later date, probably in the third or fourth century A.D.

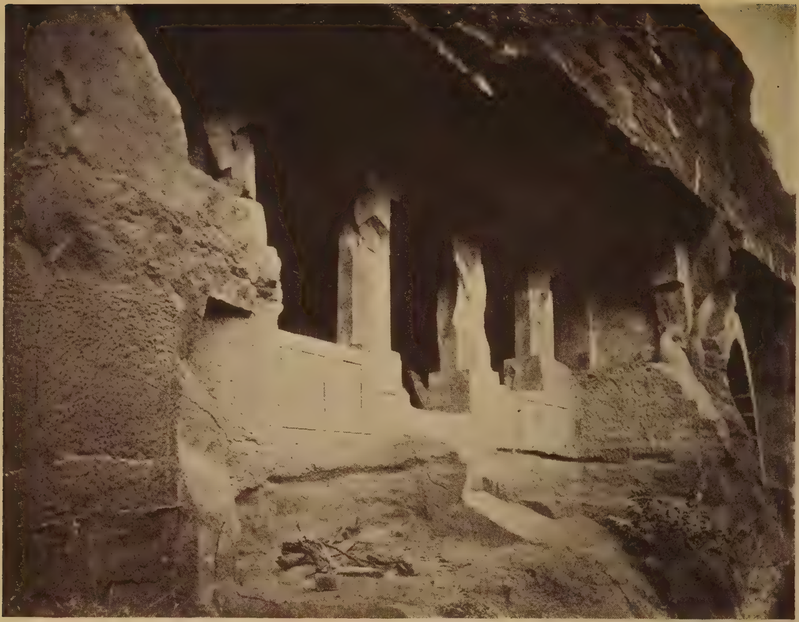
The frieze along the front above the columns is carved with miniature chaitya ornamental windows. This cave measures sixty-three feet long by fourteen feet wide, and is only about ten feet high, and has no hall. From its shape it really forms nothing but a very long baranda. On each side of the baranda is a room on a little higher level than the floor, with two pillars in the doorway, and these rooms contain more cells. In the back wall of the baranda are four other cells, apparently excavated as living-rooms for the honourable guests at the university. Right at the back, in the centre of the wall between these cells, is an ante-chamber leading to the shrine, where sits a colossal statue of Buddha Deba, cross-legged, on a lion throne,



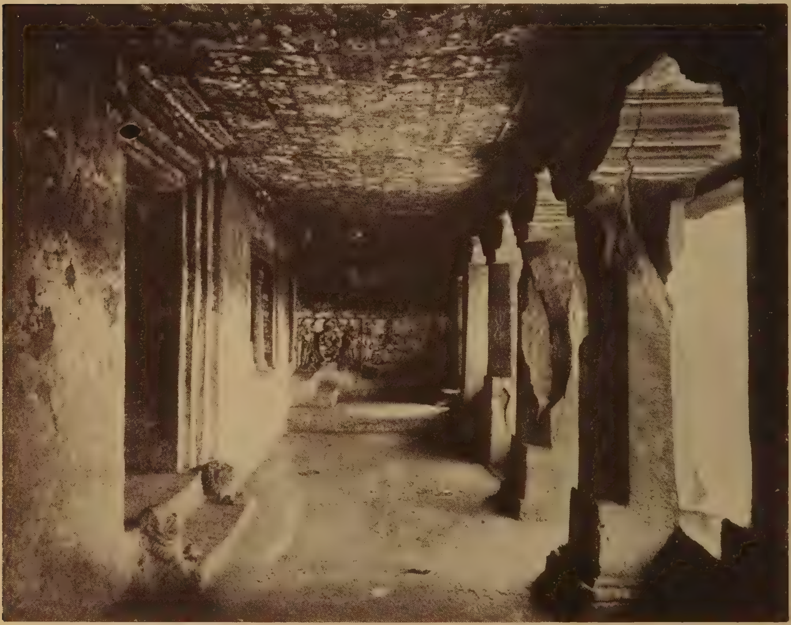
FAÇADE OF CAVE 4.



BARANDA OF CAVE 7.



FAÇADE OF CAVE 11.



BARANDA OF CAVE 11.

his right hand raised in the act of blessing. On each side of the door of the sanctuary are eight good sculptures of four Buddhas standing and four worshippers. On the right and left sides of the shrine are very many good sculptures of Buddhas in rows, about seven in a row, sitting and standing on the lotus, and the leaves between them. The stem of the lowest and central lotus is upheld by two kneeling figures wearing royal headdresses: probably they were the donors of the caves.

Once also the whole of this temple was covered with beautiful paintings, for during the whole of the day it is well lighted. A good many very faint fragments of paintings still remain on the back wall, but no artist has yet ventured to copy them.

Much higher up the cliff on the left of chaitya 10 was another natural cavern of rather a different type, which was developed into a beautiful residence for the high priests of chaitya 10. This was especially convenient for them, as they would be close to their religious duties.

This bihara No. 11 is much smaller in size than chaitya No. 10, and might be either exactly contemporary with or a few years later than its companion.

Its general appearance from outside is quite plain and simple, and in keeping with its neighbours of this very early period. Its antiquity is shewn by the rubbed edges of the flight of small steps leading up to it. A peculiar feature of the front of it is the baranda, which shuts it in and makes it cosy. The baranda is supported in front by four octagonal columns with bracket capitals and square bases, raised on a panelled parapet, the roof of the baranda projecting over the pillars. At one time the whole of this cave, both roof and walls, was elaborately painted; unfortunately, with the exception of a few places in the baranda, these paintings are almost entirely gone. Whatever survived the hand of Nature was obliterated by some modern pretended holy men, who took up their abode in these caves and daubed the walls over with clay and cowdung.

The doorway leading from the baranda to the interior hall is plainer and less decorative than those of the other biharas of a later date than this series; the steps leading to the hall, however, are adorned with two lions' heads of good design. On either side of this door is a large, square window, divided by two pillars into three openings; and so this cave, though small, can receive some light, especially towards afternoon. On the left of the door there has once been a lovely painting of a tall, standing Buddha on a bluish-black ground, his robe held gracefully in his left hand. Much of the remaining painting seems to consist of pictures of Buddhas and of the Prince Gautama. By the side of the door is a painting of Prince Gautama holding some lilies in his left hand, and above this are other good figure designs. On the right side also has been a similar figure, but not in such a good state of preservation.

Above the left window there remain, too, a great many paintings of Buddha. Over the right one are plump figures of boys and another group of six Buddhas.

The inside of the baranda roof, both the inner portion and that projecting outside the pillars, still bears a good deal of painting—the remains of flowers, birds and other decorative designs.

At either end of the baranda is a cell containing some good bas-relief sculptures depicting seated images of Buddha. One of these latter is placed on a low platform raised above the floor of the cell by two steps. These carvings of Buddhas were probably executed at a slightly later date.

The inside hall is about thirty-seven feet long by twenty-eight feet wide, with a flat ceiling ten feet high, supported in the centre on four octagonal columns. These columns are of a very early style, and it is probable that this cave was one of the first examples of the introduction of pillars in the biharas or monastery halls.

No sooner, however, have you entered the cave than you are driven out. The air inside is thick with the foulest of stenches arising from centuries of unmolested occupation by bats and owls. That foul odour is the worst enemy of the artist, who cannot possibly concentrate his mind quietly while copying the inside frescoes, even though the whole of the wide front of bihara cave 11 is open. Every quarter of an hour I had to drop my work and come into the fresh air to breathe. This is tragic enough, but in some of the other caves the smell is so horrible that one never wants to venture in.

Opening into the hall of this cave are eight cells, three on the left, three on the right, and two in the back wall, one on either side of the middle sanctuary. The sanctuary which opens directly from the cave is a room about fifteen feet square. The statue of Buddha is not placed against the wall, but stands at a little distance from it, so that the priests could take the new-comers right round it, or the monks, if they wished, at any hour could encircle it in prayer. Buddha here sits on a throne with two charmingly-carved deer on either side of the round halo of the wheel, and two lions behind them. There are no attendants, but above are flying figures. In front of this image of Buddha is a beautiful natural stone carving of a man kneeling in adoration with an offering in his hands: this probably was the portrait of the donor of this cave.

It is most wonderful that towards the evening the last rays of the sun fall upon the face of Buddha, so that it is lit with divine ecstasy.

High up on the wall and scarcely visible, on the left side of the sanctuary, is an aperture opening into a secret cell,—a pitch-dark recess, fearful and mysterious, and unique in the whole series of caves at Ajanta.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MY SERVANT'S DEATH

Long before the sun rose I used to get up and call the servant, and while he ran to the village to buy eggs and milk for breakfast I would fetch water from the stream and collect wood for a fire. Water had been scarce, but now the monsoon was coming over the land, and the tiny little river Baghora was getting swifter every day, losing its crystal transparency in a dark muddy torrent. While my servant cooked the breakfast I completed my dressing by winding the puttees round my legs. Well before eight o'clock, having warned Narayan to boil and filter the drinking water, I used to start on the five-mile walk to the caves.

My morning and evening diversion was to try to discover a shorter track through the undulating and very rough ground to and from the caves, and it was not long before I found a few light trails made by the soft hooves of wild cattle and boars, which led there much quicker than the old twisting and winding paths.

In the dark, evil-smelling caves, by the light of a petrol lamp, I stood the whole day copying the frescoes. At noon a boy or man would come with a lunch basket on his head, looking flustered, and lolling his tongue out of his mouth to show how tired the long walk from the village had made him. Almost every day on opening the basket I found that more than half my food had gone; sometimes only a few little bones were lying in the gravy. It was no good saying anything to the man, as the answer always was: "It has fallen off." Padlock or no padlock, the food-bearer always had his share. In despair I asked Narayan to bring my lunch to the caves, but the result was that the poor man had no time to prepare an evening meal for me in the bungalow.

The chowkidhars, or caretakers of the caves, who came every day from the village of Ajanta, used to leave the caves very early, long before sunset. This puzzled me, until they advised me to leave with them, saying that on several occasions tigers had crossed their path, even at twilight. I did not take much notice of this, but worked until it was dark.

By this time I had made one or two copies of the frescoes and some tracings from the walls, and was now copying a large piece of painting which represented the birth of Buddha on the left wall of cave 2.

One evening, just as the sun was setting, I was alone in the caves, the chowkidhars having already departed, I at last put out my petrol lamp by which I had been working the whole day, and prepared to leave for the bungalow. Suddenly I was surprised to see the cave grow gradually brighter and brighter, until very soon it became much brighter than by the artificial lamp-light; so that I was able to compare comfortably my copy with the original painting on the wall, and criticise the colours which look different by artificial light. Greatly astonished, I walked round the cave, seeing clearly each fresco on the walls, until the cave sunk into darkness.

The next day I waited to see whether this phenomenon would be repeated, and about the same time as the evening before the whole cave lit up for a very brief while and then darkened. The reason for this is that towards evening the last rays of the descending sun are reflected on the ground in front of the caves and also on the hills opposite. The idea occurred to me to dispose sheets of paper where they might reflect sunlight into the dark cave and on to the frescoed walls. Thus I saved my petrol lamp.

The monsoon broke, and the river issuing from the caves grew sometimes into an impassable, roaring torrent, and one morning was so swollen that it was impossible to reach the caves, and I had to return to the bungalow and remain there for three days. Narayan and I planned after a long discussion to move to the caves and live there, renewing our store of food once a week from the bazaar at Vakod. As soon as the rain stopped a little and the torrent grew quiet, we packed up and left the bungalow and came to settle in cave 7, which had once been the home of Buddhist monks. Here I felt happy ; I had more time to do my work.

Now in the heavy monsoon the waterfall by the extreme western caves became big and thundering, and all day and night I could hear it pouring and pouring. Mists and clouds passed over the hills and clung to their tops, and shivered through the thick green trees ; but sometimes, like magic a lovely deep blue sky would appear between the two hill slopes, and the golden rays of the morning sun shone on the leaves in the forest and reflected like little mirrors. The peacocks screamed and strutted and the whole forest and scene became wonderful. Monkeys, porcupines and mongooses passed by the stream and even snakes swam in the water. Frogs of all kinds were always leaping about. The silence of the dark night was broken by their loud croaking and the noisy murmur of trees swaying with the wind.

I was wrapped in a sort of artistic ecstasy, interested in the wonderful old pictures, living in the atmosphere created by the ancient Buddhists who founded their monasteries and performed their religious works on this extraordinary site. But poor Narayan began to change. He was getting tired of living alone. He hardly talked or smiled. During the whole week he looked forward to the bazaar day at Vakod, and when it came he smiled, put on his clean turban and best clothes, took the money and started off very early. At night he returned with a little leg of mutton, rice, lentils and a few vegetables, onions and occasionally potatoes, and we enjoyed ourselves the same night and next day thoroughly; the meat could not be kept after that.

Narayan looked so sad, and soon I failed to make him smile, and he began to ask me: "Sahib, when shall we finish here? How long will your work take? Aren't we going home soon?"

Life was becoming very lonely and difficult for him. One day he took money, went to the bazaar, and did not come back to the caves for three days, while I starved on barley water. When he did arrive he was in a bad state—no clothes, no turban, no food, no money! I was horrified to find him like this. He said very quietly, bowing his head: "Everything was stolen from me!" It was no good scolding him, for he might have run away from me altogether. Then he pressed me to let us go back to the bungalow at the village of Fardapur now that the monsoon was over. Finally he prevailed and we moved back there again.

Now the heavy downpour of rain had almost come to an end, and the sun began to shine brightly and as hot as ever. The moist, warm vapour rose from the earth and there ensued an unhealthy season. The road was knee-deep in clay and mud. The heaps of rubbish and cow-dung around the houses and everywhere in the river became thick and muddy. Finally cholera broke out all round the villages and, at last, in Fardapur itself.

One morning, after breakfast, as I was leaving for my day's work at the caves, Narayan came to me, saying: "Sahib, there is cholera in the village." I strictly enjoined him not to go there, and once more emphasised my orders that he was on no account to neglect the boiling and filtering of the water.

That night when I returned from my day's work, I found to my amazement a gorgeous welcome. The bath water was hot, the drinking water in the filter was full, the supper was prepared, with home-made rolls and scones, and not only special chops, but also a plate full of pudding with cream and custard. Having enjoyed this unexpected comfort, I became aware of Narayan hovering nervously in the background. He was evidently very uneasy about something, but he could not make up his mind to speak. At last: "Sahib," he said in a very weak voice, as he stood behind me, "I don't feel well." My suspicions were roused.

There had been cases of cholera in the village, and I had forbidden him to go near it. He had disobeyed me! I felt uneasy myself lest he might be sickening of that dread disease. He was certainly very ill. He brought his blanket and wrapping himself in its folds, lay down on the ground by my side. I opened my medicine chest, for now I felt sure it was cholera, and gave him a dose of the remedy I had brought with me. But alas, it was too late. He was past human aid, yet I struggled and fought for his life all that night alone in the bungalow. He sank very rapidly, became unconscious, and as the morning dawned he passed away.

I was left alone with the corpse of this poor man, and not a soul would come near, for the very word cholera was enough to make the villagers flee the place. But it was essential that he should be buried decently and with the kind help of the Patel Sahib of Fardapur, together with wholesale bribery and money for drinks, I prevailed on several of the stouter of the villagers to dig a grave. Wrapped in clean white muslin and his blanket we laid him to rest in the shadow of the great rocks near the sandy banks of the Baghora river.

That evening seemed to me too terrible. The blood-red sun as usual went down beyond the deep-blue Bindhya range, casting long, gloomy shadows everywhere. The air was stifling, drowsy and still. I felt sad and lonely.

I came back to the bungalow and realised that neither food, water nor even the place was safe to touch. The same night I went away for a few days' change of air to my friend's, Professor J. B. Raju at Nagpur, intending to bring back a servant with me. Many came, but as soon as they heard they would have to stay in the jungle they did not wish to remain. One of the younger servants agreed, however, but I did not employ him lest he should make the same mistake as Narayan, going too much to the village for companionship and drink and thereby catching the deadly diseases of cholera or plague.

Then in Nagpur one afternoon, while I was smoking away in an armchair and thinking about returning to the caves, there approached a tall old man with a big grey moustache, dressed in a clean white coat, turban and trousers, who gave me a salute and held out a bundle of old letters. These testimonials showed that he had served many of the high officials and had been head cook to the Chief Commissioner of Nagpur.

Then he said, " I am too old, nobody gives me work. Sahib, give me some bakshish." I rather liked his look and explained all about my sojourn in the jungles of Ajanta, and asked him whether he would like to come to cook for me on very good pay. He said eagerly, assuring me : " Yes, sir, I know all about those jungle places ; I shall look after you like a father."

So once again I returned to the bungalow, feeling cheerful at having secured such a treasure and thinking that old Dhandu would see to my physical needs and I should be able to devote myself entirely to work in the caves.

By this time the bungalow had been properly washed and made habitable. Now, with renewed vigour I began to copy frescoes in the caves.

For a day or two Dhandu cooked well ; but after a little while began to neglect first one thing then another. He appeared to find the situation less agreeable than he had hoped. Grumbling at me, he said : " No water, no saucepans, no coal, no gas, no nothing here." How was it likely that he could produce a dinner in such a place! His manner changed rapidly from bad to worse; he grew more and more sullen; at last he forgot to answer my call; in fact even breakfast was impossible to get.

He gathered round him in the kitchen a group of young villagers and bought them cigarettes, gave them my food and began to sell my things in return for their help while he lay all the time in a cot inside the kitchen. Whenever I called he sent a village man to me to say: "He can't move, as he has rheumatism all over his body."

One day I went to see whether this tale was true. Apprised of my arrival, he pretended to be ill of cholera, took a mouthful of water before I entered the kitchen and vomited in front of me as soon as I appeared, saying: "Sahib, I am dying; do please send me home from this jungle." I felt sorry and disgusted to have chosen a man like him and, thinking he was more hindrance than help to my work, I decided to put up with him no longer; and so I paid his wages and he took a hasty departure, comfortably seated in a bullock cart.

I went to Patel Sahib at Fardapur. He had been kind to me on several former occasions, and he it was who had found men to bury poor Narayan. By his influence, but with great difficulty, I at last managed to get a middle-aged Mussulman named Buddhu Miya as a cook from the village of Ajanta, at least he called himself a cook, though he knew hardly anything about his job. However, I closed with him for a good wage and he stayed with me to the end.

Once, however, I narrowly escaped losing him. I returned hungrier than usual to find a meal of only rice and lentils nasty and hard, impossible to eat, through not being boiled properly. In my annoyance I called him a pig, which upset him considerably. " Sahib," he said, " take off your shoes and beat me, but do not call me a pig." I replied : " If you do not boil my food properly I shall call you a pig," and thereafter he worked well.

Then by tact and a little present of money I mollified him, and a little later suggested that as he had to bring my food to the caves every day, leaving almost no time to cook an evening meal, we should inhabit the caves and so save our tedious and uncomfortable journey to and from the side of the cliff.

We therefore got hold of some men and a bullock cart from the village, and carrying our belongings once again we all moved on to the caves for a very long stay.

CHAPTER NINE

I MOVE INTO THE CAVES

I NOW lived and slept in the baranda of cave 7, and Buddhu Miya cooked for me outside, so that neither smoke nor fire could harm the walls or ceilings. We thus entered upon a life of interest and excitement which lasted for many months.

In the course of centuries various other caves which fall into the second group of six, and are numbered 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, were excavated on the left side of the cliff. These excavations extended in point of time from about the birth of Christ to the fifth or sixth century A.D., at which date they were properly finished; the architectural designs and inscriptions prove their date to be much later than the first group of caves.

High up in the rock, almost directly over cave 13 of the first group, is a large unfinished bihara, Number 14, which is approached by a steep ascent from bihara 12. This cave has no painting or sculpture, and probably was excavated somewhere about 100 A.D. The baranda is of rather vast proportions, as it measures about sixty-three feet by eleven feet wide and nine feet high, and has six square pillars plainly decorated.

We do not know the real reason why the hall was never finished and the front aisle only was partially cut out, about twelve feet, but we may conjecture that this was probably due to the softer character of the rock, which rendered it more liable to crack. At each end of the baranda are unfinished guest-chambers which give cool shelter. Besides these a very neat central door and two windows on either side were cut.

Next on the left of bihara 14, much lower down in the cliff, is a small plain bihara cave, 15. In the rainy season a torrent from above pours down, sometimes making access impossible. Probably for the same reason the pillars of this cave have broken away. The baranda is thirty feet long, six feet wide and about ten feet high, and there is one cell at each end. On either side of the doorway are wonderfully good sculptures and low reliefs. The hall is almost thirty-four feet square and ten feet high, without columns. At each side are four cells. Just opposite the main entrance is a sanctuary, and on the shrine is a stone image of Buddha, which was carved out from the solid rock probably a little later than the cave. It is one of the first examples of the placing of an image of Buddha in a monastery hall; and the age of the image may be assumed to be about 200 A.D. Evidently this cave was once fully covered with paintings, for traces still remain on the ceiling.

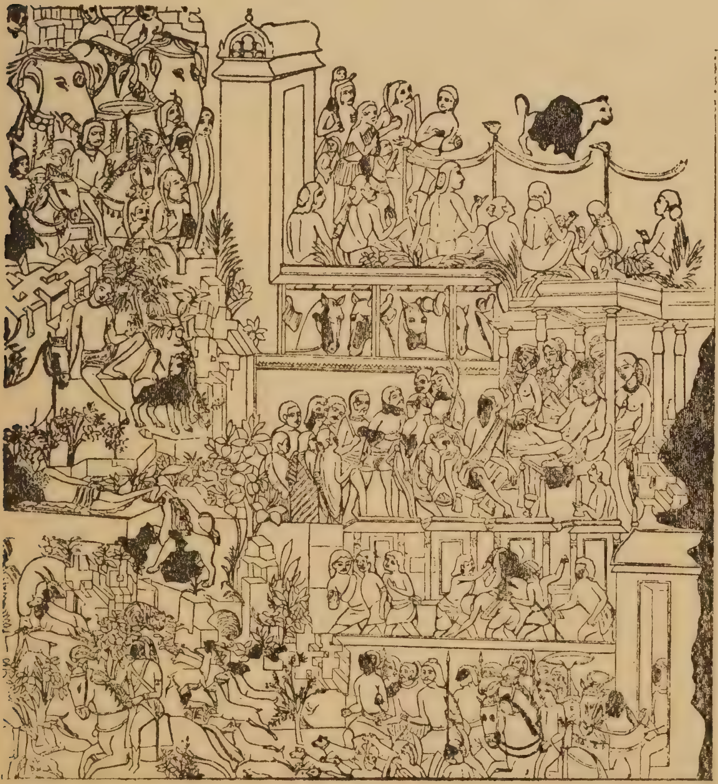
On the left, again, is cave 16, one of the most important cave-temples of Buddhist India in this group. Even to-day, as one approaches this cave and its neighbour, 17, from the bottom of the ravine, one catches a glimpse of the golden-red frescoes within. One finds there the most astonishing paintings in the world for so early a date as the second or third century A.D. The style of architecture, carving and painting is graceful and elegant. These caves are situated at a slightly greater height above the bottom of the ravine than the caves of the first period. It is interesting to observe how cleverly the architects of those days followed the vein of the rock where the texture was most suitable for excavation.

The large baranda of cave 16 is sixty-five feet long and twelve feet wide. Six plain octagonal columns with bracket columns support the roof. The main entrance has two windows on each side, and here the wall is carved with river goddesses, but the paintings have perished. One cell leads from each end of the baranda. The ceiling of this cave is extensively ornamented with beautiful painting, a great part of which has unfortunately been destroyed.

High up in the corner at the left end of the baranda is an inscription of a great many lines, mutilated by the weather. The full meaning of the inscription has not hitherto been deciphered, but one can roughly make out the meaning of the opening sentence : " A king salutes first the renowned Buddha, who removed the intense fire of misery from this world." And then it goes on to mention names of many other kings and of their dwellings.

The hall is about sixty-five feet square and fifteen feet high, which is higher than those of the first group. Here as many as twenty octagonal pillars support the ceiling, and their sides were once painted with wreaths of flowers and other designs. The ceiling is gorgeously carved, representing beams and rafters, the higher ends being supported by brackets in the shape of plump and almost dwarf-like boys. This is peculiar to, and common in, the Ajanta sculpture and painting. Wherever the artist found a chance he introduced such figures. Six cells lead from each side of the interior hall and two are in the back wall. Directly beyond the main entrance in the shrine there is seated a gigantic statue of Buddha on a stone throne, with both legs stretched downwards and the hands raised in the teaching position. Just as in bihara No. 11 of the first group, so here also a narrow passage encircles the great image to enable the pilgrims or priests to walk with devotion round the Buddha. This was, no doubt, a residence for one of the big Sangha.

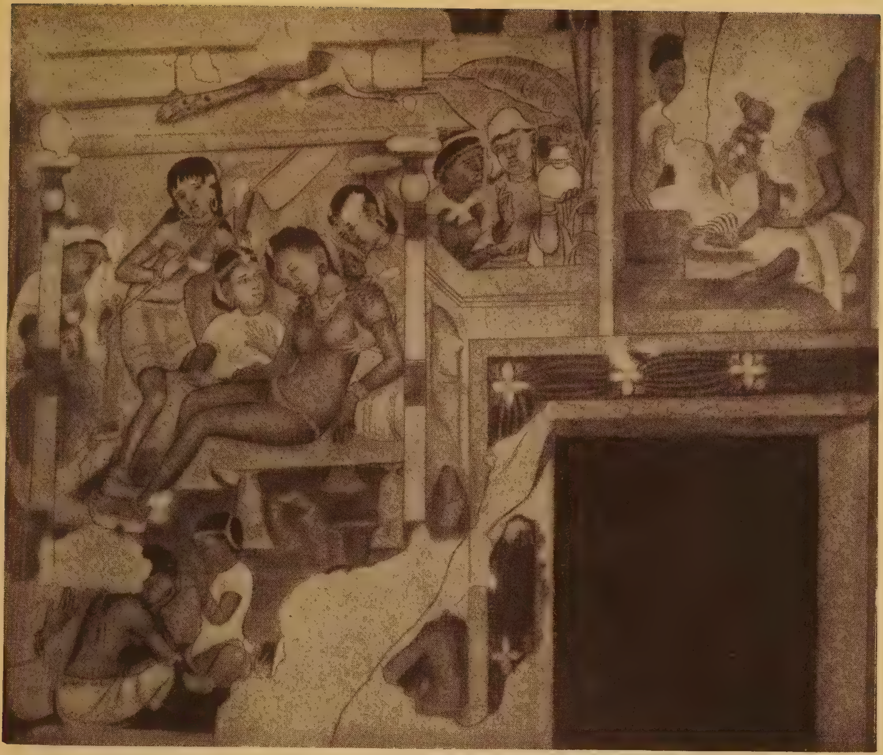
In the hall a great many masterpieces of painting still exist on the walls. But they were foolishly varnished by British officials, and are



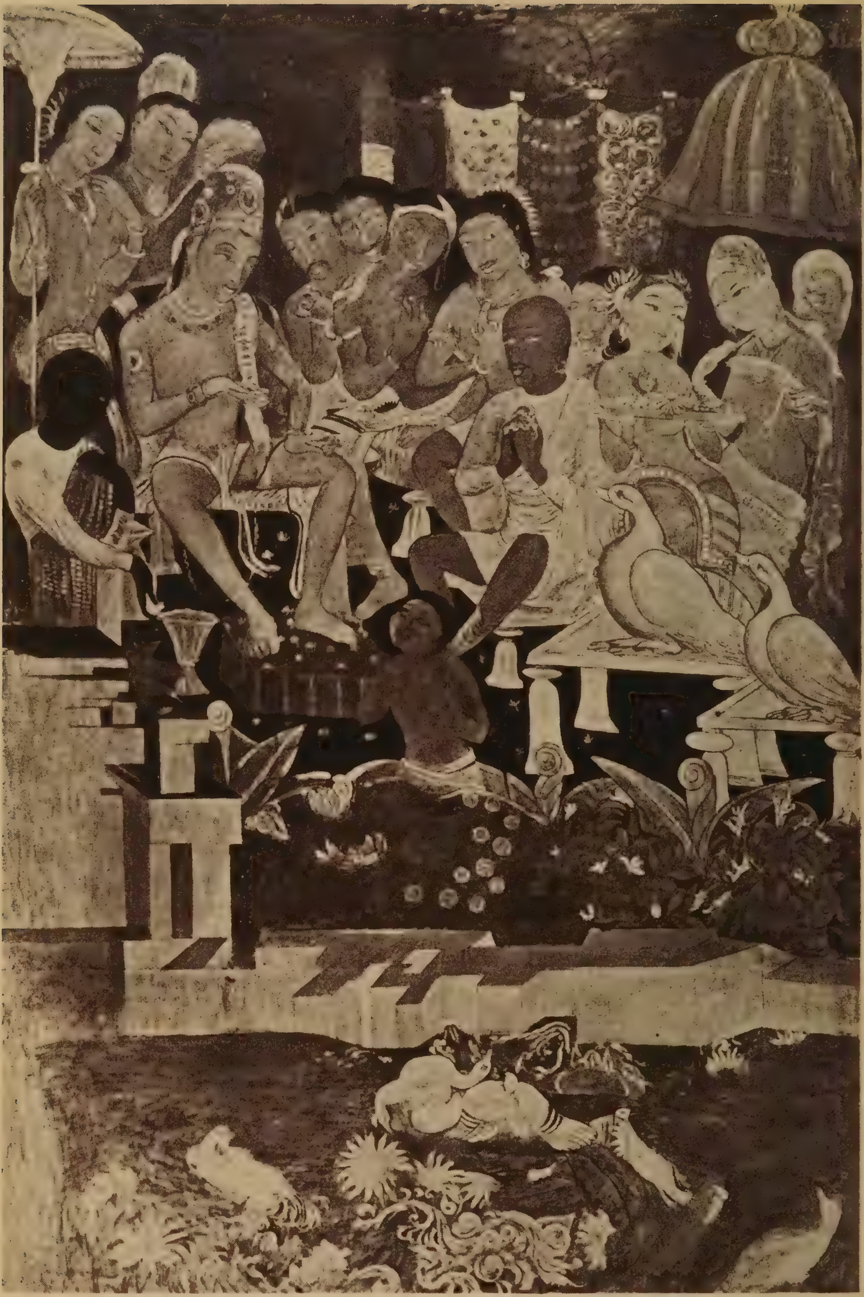
A WALL PAINTING IN CAVE 16

now almost ruined, so that one can hardly make them out. On the left wall in the hall is a wonderful painting of a dying princess, which can hardly be surpassed in the history of the world's art and on the same wall there are many other very good paintings—for instance, Buddha with his mendicant's bowl, teaching in a bihara, surrounded by kings and rich people, who kneel and pay him reverence. Again, on the back wall, is a very large scene of elephants ridden by kings among attendants with drums and musical instruments, and soldiers with long blue curved swords. In another scene Buddha Deba is seated on a throne, teaching a great assembly of crowned princes and other people. On the right were several other interesting paintings from the legend of Buddha, such as Saint Asita-muni with the infant Buddha in his arms and lap, and he is again represented as a young Sidhartha at school drawing the bow and learning sports. It breaks one's heart to see these marvellous pictures ruined through the application of varnish by thoughtless people who came to copy them.

One evening a number of monkeys appeared in front of the cave where I was dwelling, in search of those wild berries which we call "kul." They are much like sour cherries with a little hard stone inside.



THE DYING PRINCESS.
Cave 16.



THE KING OF BENARES HONOURING THE GOLDEN GEESE.
CAVE 17.

By permission of the India Society.

I wanted to get rid of these uninvited guests for fear lest they should try to spend the night in my cave, and so to make them move on I threw a few stones. They began to slip off, but some clung to the trees or jumped from branch to branch. To make quite sure of getting rid of them I followed with a rod in my hand, broken from a branch. Suddenly some of the monkeys disappeared as if by magic. I investigated and found they had gone down some old stone steps towards the stream. In the jungle, of course,

A NAGA-KING

there are no roads and one never knows to what one is coming.

In front of cave 16 I found myself in a sort of broken room. By its side was a little watering-place like a small tank or well, where there was still water, and there was in the chamber a damaged statue of a snake king, seated upon the coils of the snake, whose five hoods, like a canopy, overshadow the king's crown.

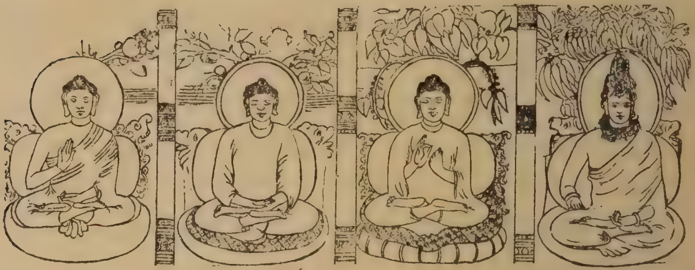
I descended the steps. All I could see above and in front of me was the jungle and trees. Some of the monkeys were sitting on top of these trees, grinning at me as I went down and down towards the little stream at the bottom. Suddenly I came to what looked like two very huge pieces of rock, but they were two large elephants of dark stone, almost life-size. I recognised them at once. They were the two famous elephants at the great ancient stairway leading to the Buddhist monastery, mentioned in a book over a thousand years old, written by one of the great Chinese pilgrims of the sixth century A.D.

Next to cave 16 is cave 17, another very fine bihara of the second group of caves. It looks as if it might be a twin cave of 16, for in size, exterior architectural appearance and the importance of its series of paintings it is very similar. As one approaches this cave one can see far off through the trees the glowing red and golden colours of its frescoes. The date of its excavation cannot be more than fifty years later, or it might be even the same age.

There is a long inscription on the left-hand top of the baranda outside, of about twenty-nine lines, in early Sanskrit verse. It would seem from this inscription, and that in cave 16, that both caves must have been built during or soon after the lifetime of the great Gupta emperor, about 375 to 413 A.D. At the right end there is a small hole in the floor leading to a fine cistern always filled with water, formerly used by the monks as drinking water; it can only be approached up a flight of steps between this cave and 16. No doubt in olden days this hole, for safety, was covered over by a wooden lid, as can be seen by the ledge cut inside the aperture on which the lid used to rest.

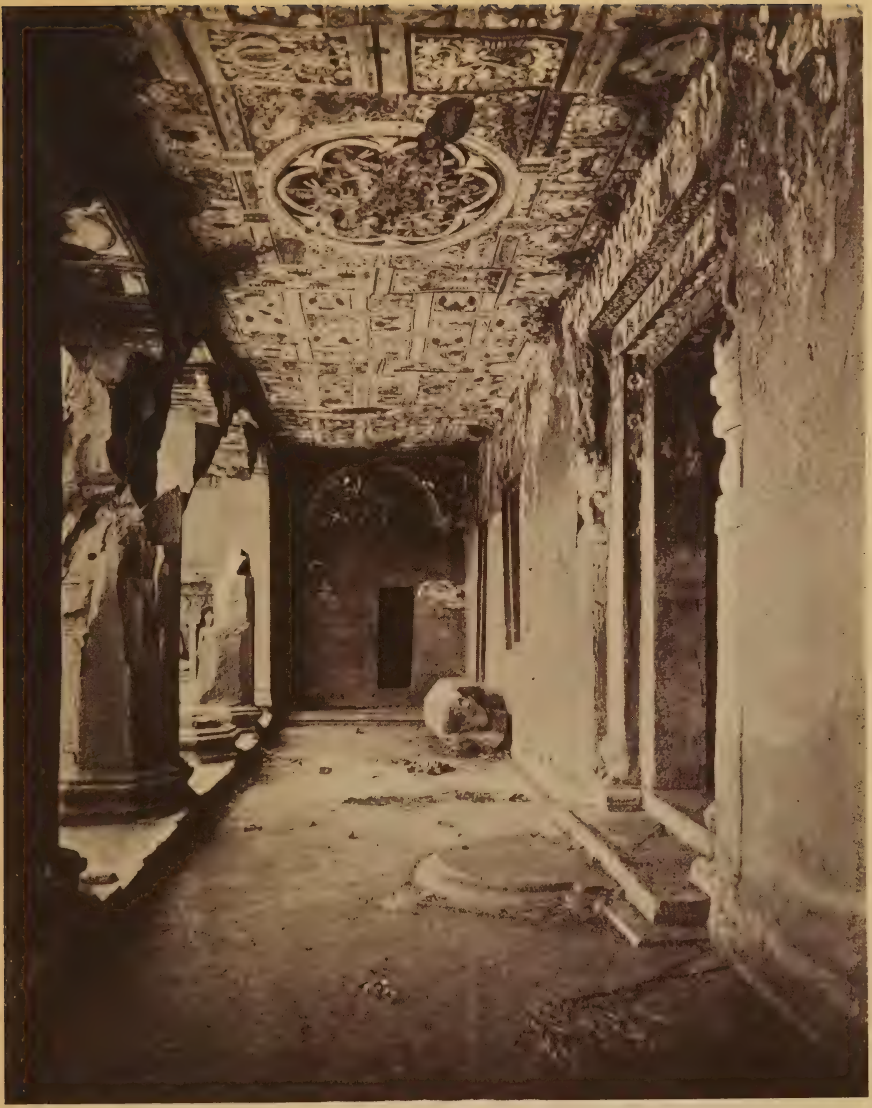
There are two cells in the baranda. At the left end over the cell there is a circular piece of painting divided into eight compartments, representing the Buddhist wheel of life. This has been much injured by the visitors, who attempted to remove parts of the paintings from the wall. The compartments have been filled with human figures, variously employed, men, women, animals, utensils, buildings, streets, all representing the circle of existence.

As regards more than two-thirds of the lower part of the baranda, no vestiges of frescoes remain, but on the upper part of the back wall is a good deal of painting in fragments. Over the central door is a lovely row of eight Buddhas, seated cross-legged in different moods, the hands uplifted in the act of teaching or benediction, one with a royal crown. Below on the lintel is a series of eight small panel designs in compartments containing two figures each, lovers offering flowers and drink to one another, some figures painted with fair and some with dark complexions.

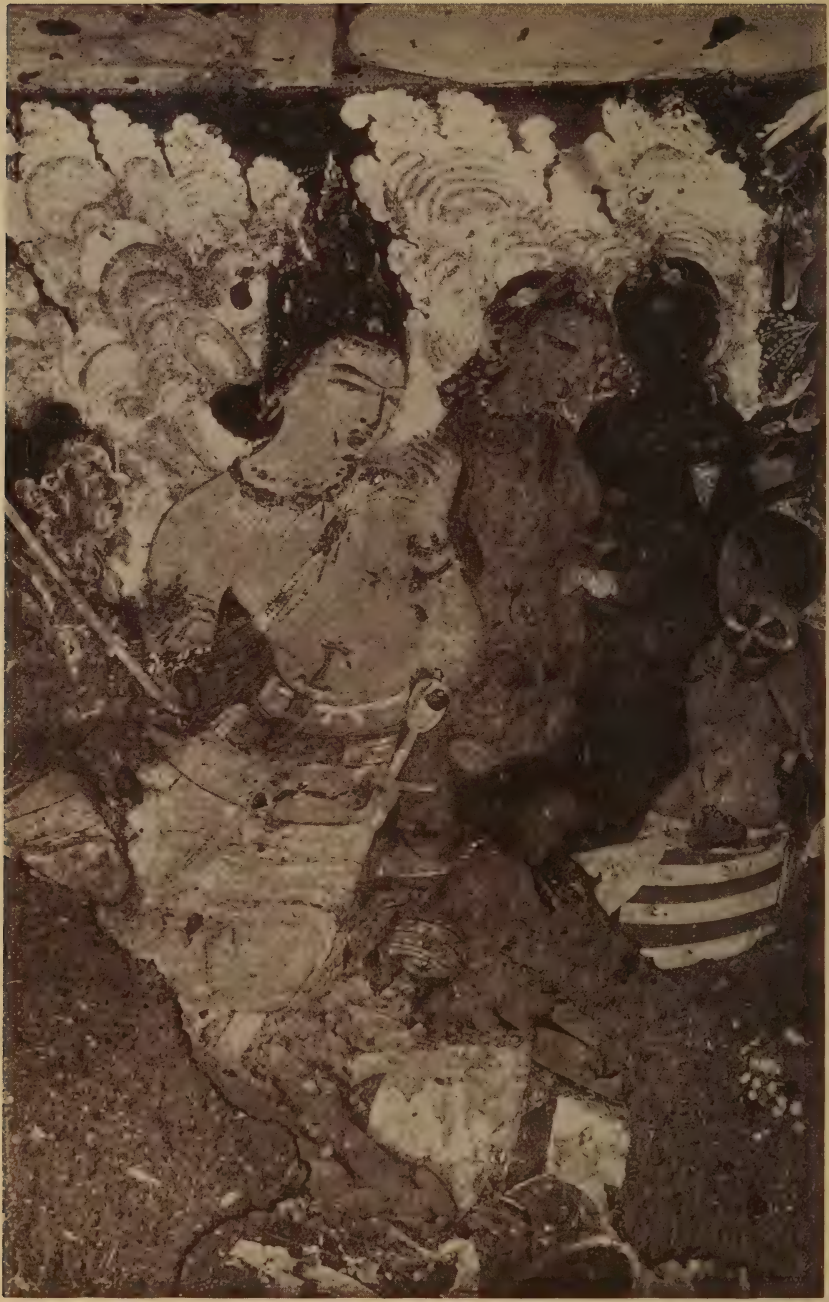


PAINTING OVER THE DOOR OF CAVE 17

Above the door into the hall in this cave 17 are two very attractive carved female figures, but all the space in the caves was once most elaborately covered with paintings. The pillars



CEILING OF BARANDA.
Cave 17.



GROUP OF MUSICIANS PASSING THROUGH THE AIR.

CAVE 17.

of the baranda are plain octagon bracket capitals, but the bases are more elegant than usual.

To the left of the baranda is a group of three fairies, accompanied by a male figure floating through the air in the night. Behind the figures are thick white clouds. Such flying figures are very usually found in pairs in Buddhist sculptures and in the paintings of this age. The whole composition is perfect. In its purity of outline and the elegance of its grouping it is one of the finest and most fascinating of the smaller paintings at Ajanta. The easy upward motion of the whole group is rendered in a manner that could not easily be surpassed.

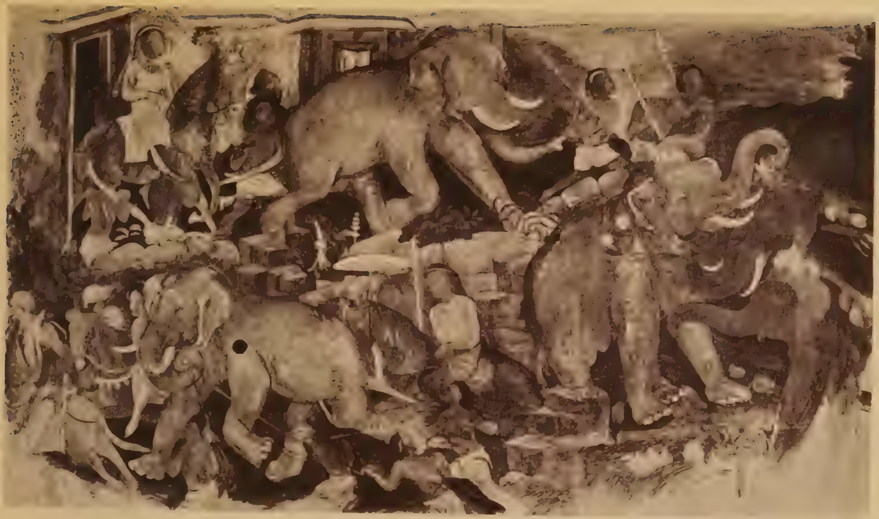
To the right of the baranda wall, just on top of the window space, is the scene in which Buddha's cousin, Debadatta, tries to get Buddha destroyed by an enraged elephant, but the huge creature kneels with reverence at Buddha's feet. The ceiling is very beautifully adorned with charming designs in good condition. On the whole this cave contains more paintings than any other cave, in spite of the fact that even here there has been much wilful destruction at the hands of European visitors.

The hall is entered by a central door, resembling that in 16, and by two side doors. It is further lighted by two windows. This apartment is sixty-three feet wide by sixty-two feet long and thirteen feet high, its roof being supported by twenty octagonal pillars, all plain, except the two in the middle of the front and back rows, which have square bases, shafts partly octagonal and partly sixteen-sided, covered with paintings. The ante-chamber is small, with two figures in front, but the shrine is eighteen feet wide by twenty feet deep, and in front of the great image there stand on the floor, two figures one holding a mendicant's bowl, the other damaged. There are also two attendants on each side of the Buddha and two fan-bearers. The hall contains sixteen cells. The whole interior is similar to that of Number 16. Here again the roof shows the wooden construction, and the pillars which support it have fat boys as brackets.

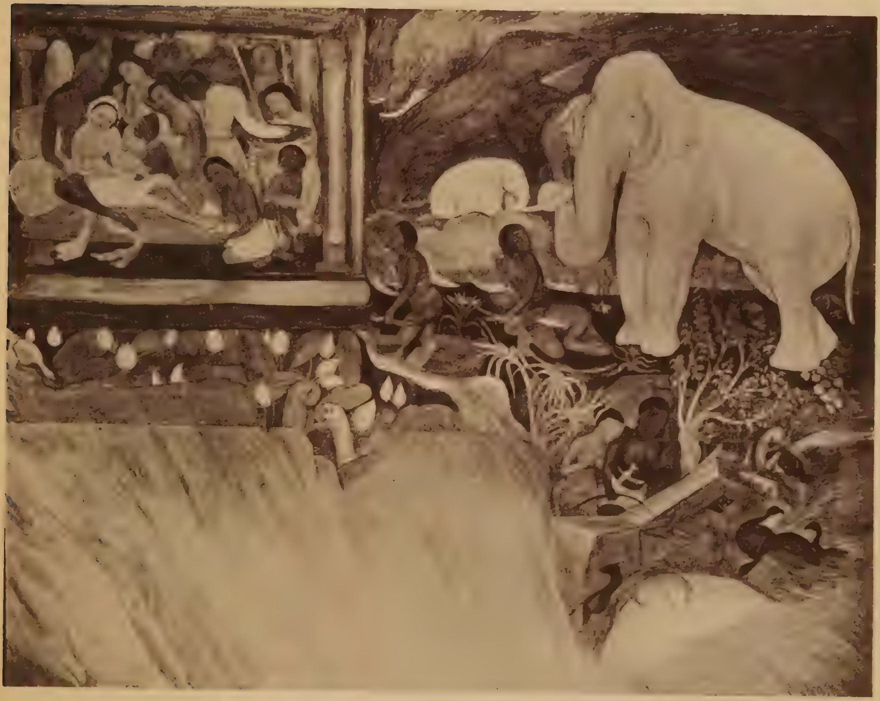
In the hall, on the wall of the left aisle, on the left end of the back wall, and everywhere, many wonderful paintings are still in existence, in spite of being much ruined with smoke, dirt and varnish. There are over sixty distinct scenes of subject painting in this cave 17.

On the middle of the right wall is a large and marvellous painting. It represents the legend of the landing of King Bijaya on Ceylon, and his conquest of the island.

In the left-hand corner a procession of elephants

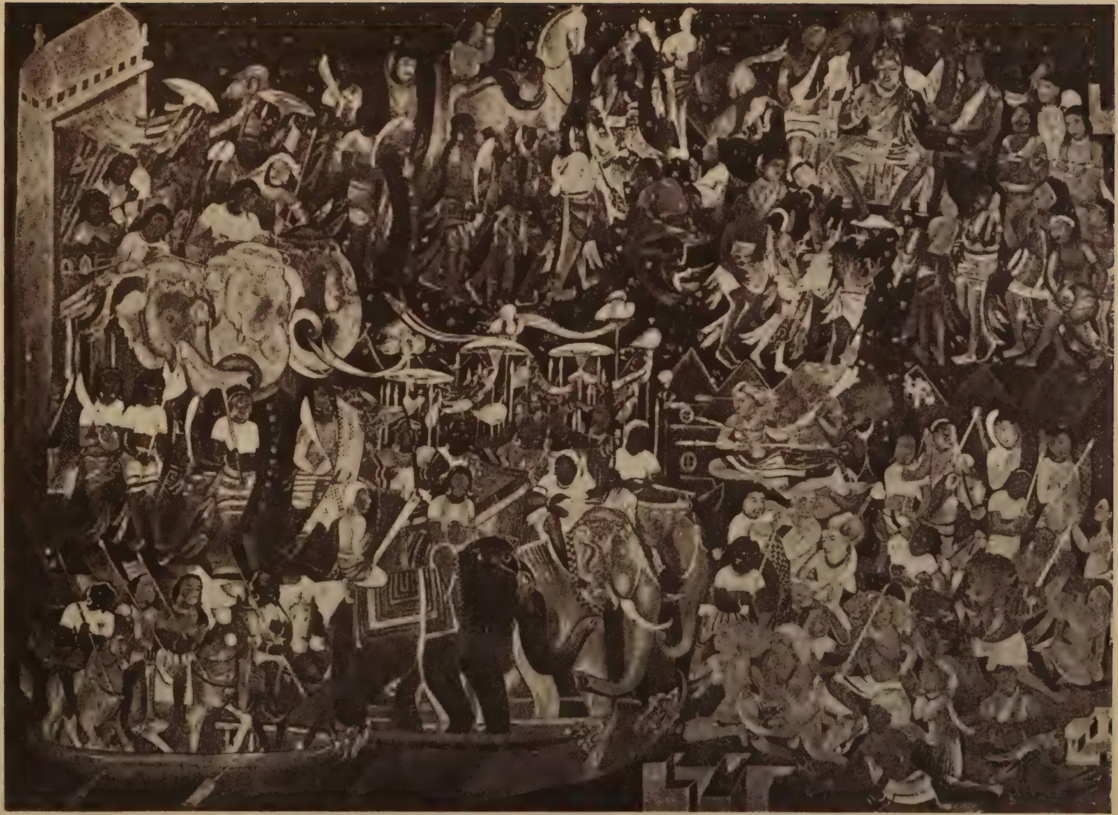


THE CAPTURE OF THE ELEPHANTS.
Cave 17.



THE BODHISATVA AS A SIX-TUSKED ELEPHANT.
Cave 17.

By permission of the India Society.



LANDING AND CORONATION OF KING BIJAYA IN CEYLON.

Cave 17.

is rushing through the gate; the cavalry and war elephants are crossing the Indian Ocean in boats; and on the shore are the demons, giant natives of Ceylon, preventing their landing. It is a narrative composition, but the whole subject is told in one picture.

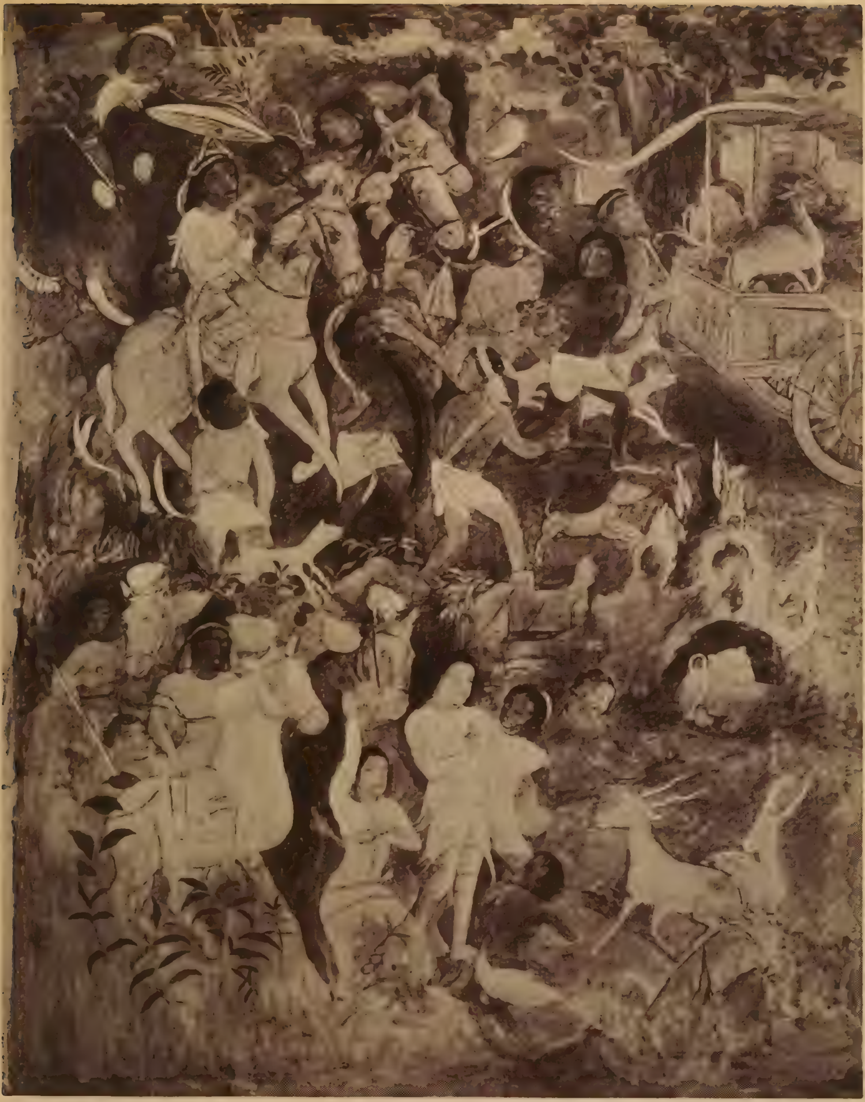
In the upper part appears the white horse, signifying that the king has now conquered the whole land. From very ancient times it was the custom that before the coronation of a great king took place a riderless white horse should be let loose over the country, followed by hundreds of soldiers, and if any other king desired to challenge the king's right of subjection and objected to the passing of the horse through his land, he tried to capture the horse. But if the horse returned unchallenged, it proved the king to be the acknowledged ruler of the land, and he was then crowned.

In this painting the unchallenged horse has come back and looks proudly toward the king, while the soldiers bow. The coronation is taking place in the right-hand corner, where is the king surrounded by beautiful dancing girls and musicians, and the parijata flowers are falling from above as a blessing from the gods in heaven.

Although this painting represents so many scenes, they have been grouped together to form one lovely picture.

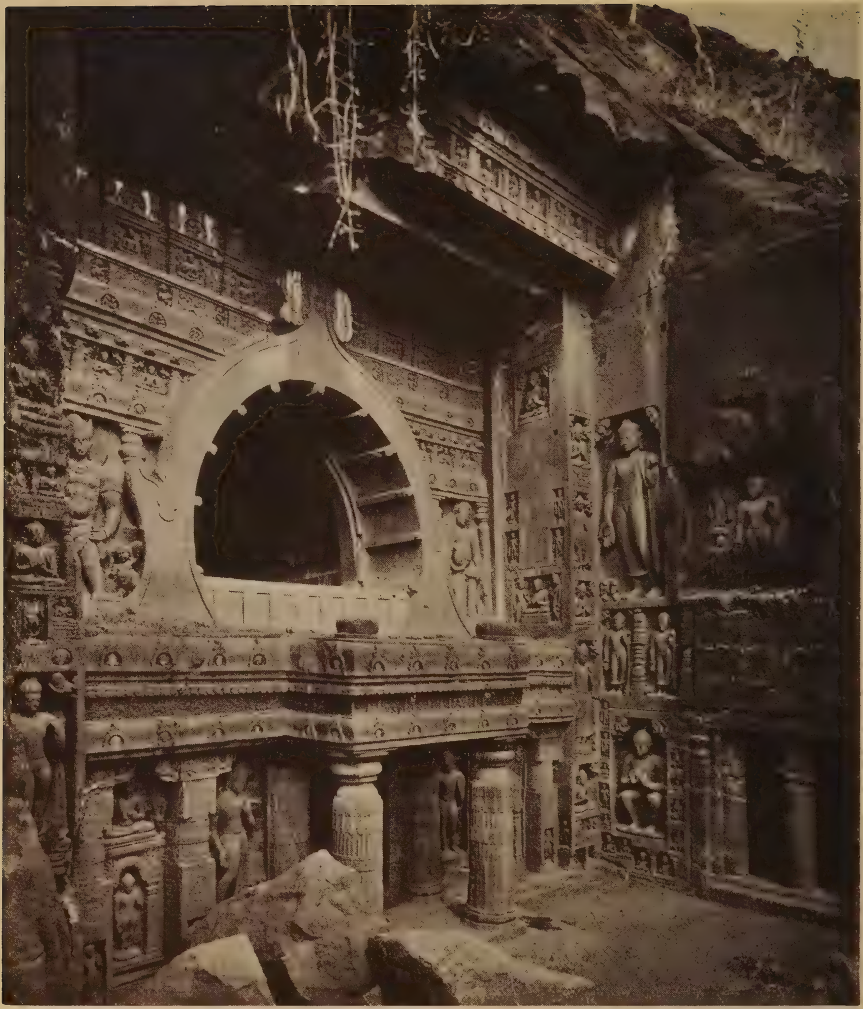
The slanting spears, the waving flags, the forward lean of the elephant-riders and the curved heads and huddled trunks of the elephants all express the emotion of great movement. The fight outside the city is divided from the triumphal entry and the coronation by a suggestion of a rampart. The flowers from heaven fall only on the inner side of the rampart. The oars of the boat are directed one way only, in order to emphasize the great speed at which the boat is being driven through the water. On the left of the shrine door in this cave 17 is another painting of pre-eminent beauty and grandeur. The subject of the composition seems to be the return of Buddha after his enlightenment, to his wife and son, Rahula. His glorified figure towers colossal against a night sky, and his feet rest on a white lotus on a deep Indian red ground. In his right hand is a begging bowl and his left hand uplifts his yellow robe. Over him an angel holds a canopy of flowers, and parijata flowers also fall upon him from heaven, while his wife and child on a balcony of the house, look up in adoration.

This painting must be one of the most majestic and tender in the world, showing intense love and spiritual devotion, and to many will be a revelation of the heights to which Indian art has



A HUNTING SCENE.
CAVE 17.

By permission of the India Society.



FAÇADE OF CAVE 19.

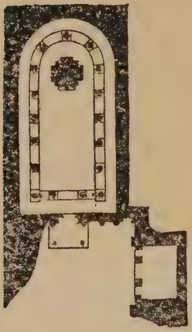
attained. Like many others, it shows what masters of animated composition and complex movement were those painters who worked in the early centuries.

There are hundreds of painted scenes in every part of this monastery hall, and they are of great interest. One of special power depicts a hunt of lions, black buck, and elephants. The colouring is vivid, and the foliage and lotus leaves are painted with a rich green. The whole posing and grouping has an air of modernity. The animals, horses, elephants, dogs, are all extremely well-drawn, the massive colours and contours painted with solid brush strokes.

Then comes cave 18, which is really no more than a porch, just over ninteen feet by about nine feet, and has two pillars. Apparently it was intended for a passage to the next cave, 19, and possibly to cover a water cistern down below. It was excavated about the same time as 17.

At that date hundreds of monks had gathered together; and, with their morning and evening prayer, made the gorge as noisy as a bazaar. They needed another chaitya cave for their worship and so made the temple now known as Number 19 to serve as the third chaitya; it is much smaller than cave 10, and almost the same size as 9, of the first group. So 19 was excavated, the only chaitya cave in the second group.

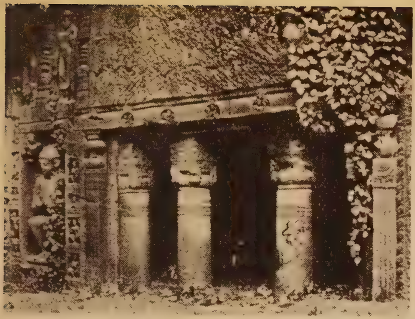
It is about twenty-four feet wide by forty-six feet long by twenty-four feet high, and it is elaborately carved with sculptures and ornamental decorative designs, both inside and out, and they remain as distinct at the present day as when they were first wrought. There is only one entrance to this cave.



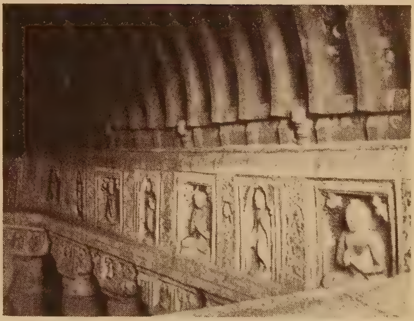
PLAN OF CAVE 19

The whole of the composition of this cave is very pleasing, and it has scarcely suffered at all from the hand of time. The decorative carving in front is very elaborate, and consists of Buddhas and additional images afterwards carved on the façade. From the façade of this chaitya temple projects a bold and carefully carved cornice, broken only at the left end by the fall of a heavy mass of rock. In front has been an enclosed court, thirty-three feet wide by thirty feet deep, but the left side of it has nearly disappeared.

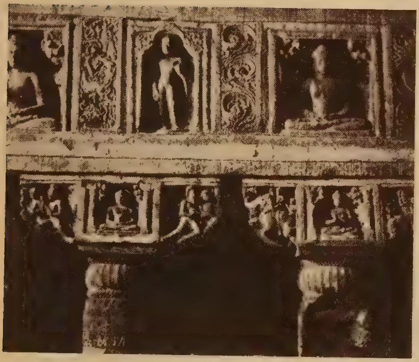
On the right of the main entrance by the porch is a bas-relief sculpture of a colossal Buddha, who has returned home after his Enlightenment.



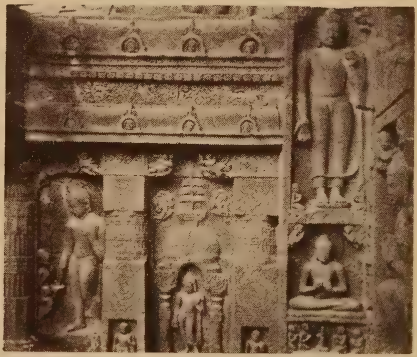
AN ALCOVE FOR REPOSE.



ROOF ABOVE TRIFORIUM.

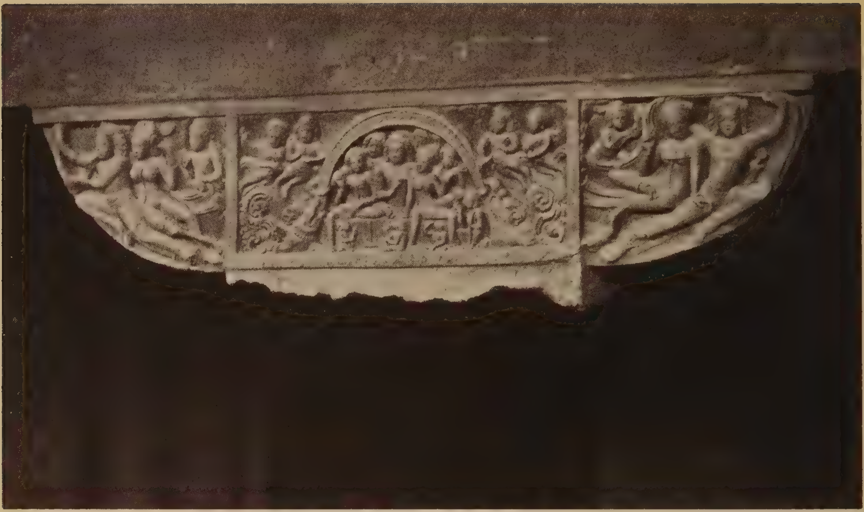


TRIFORIUM OF CHAITYA

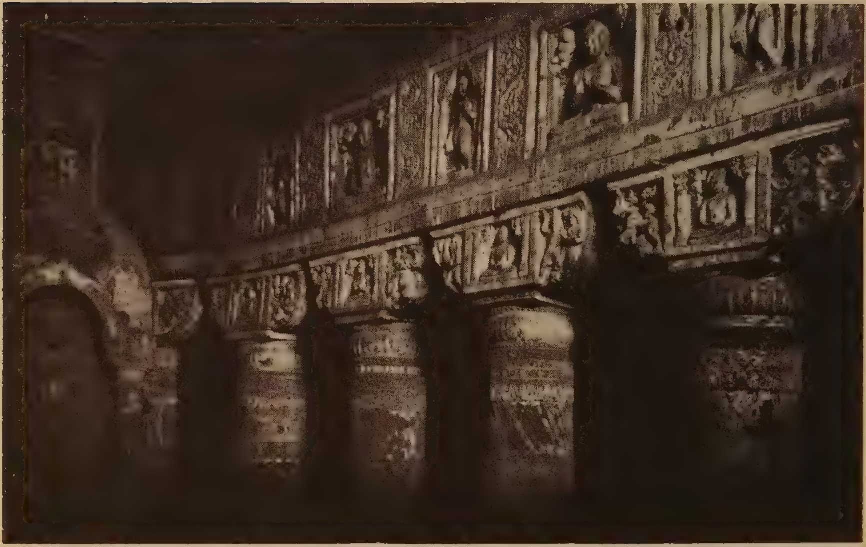


LOWER PART OF FAÇADE.

Cave 19.



A CAPITAL IN THE BARANDA.
CAVE 24.



THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE NAVE.
CAVE 19.

His wife is lifting forward her son Rahula to place alms in his father's begging bowl.

In the next compartment he is standing in front of a stupa richly ornamented and surmounted by the triple umbrella. Above, on the upper right-hand corner, he is represented again in the most usual standing attitude, preaching, his right hand hanging down, his left raised. Probably these sculptures are of a later date.

There are many Buddhas sitting cross-legged, and standing in the usual attitude of exposition.

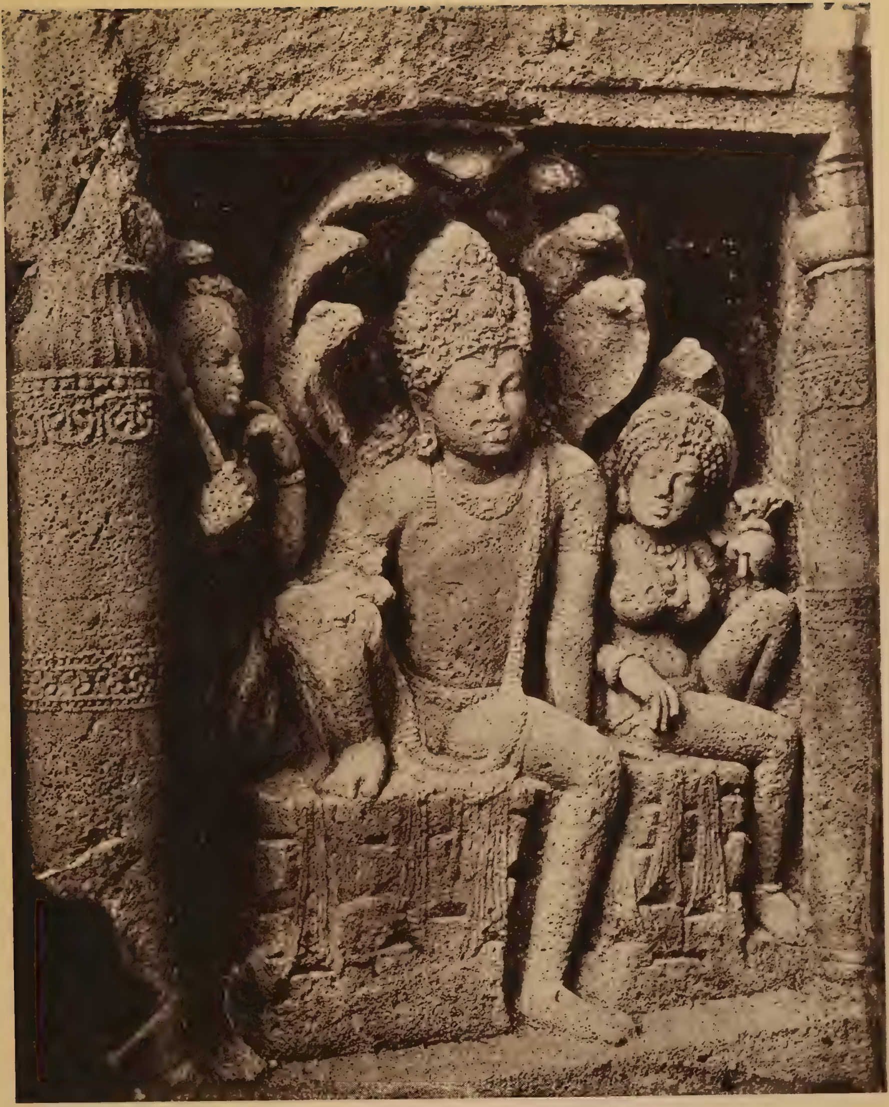
The whole of the front of this cave is fully covered with sculptured groups and with most elaborate ornamentation, still in very good preservation. The great arched window above the porch shows the wooden forms of the ribs. The stone imitation of wooden structure is very prominent in this cave, and the rafters and beams were carefully hewn out in the ceilings. At the right angle of the main façade is a place of repose for pilgrims or attendants. The room is small in size, the capitals of the pillars are richly carved with mango branches and clusters of grapes in the middle.

Opposite to the rest-house is a great sculpture of a snake king, who probably was a strong supporter of Buddhism, seated under a canopy of a seven-hooded cobra snake, with his queen by his side. In her left hand she holds a lotus flower. On the right a female attendant was carved with a fly-fan in her hand.

On each side of the great arch window is a male figure in halo and rich head-dress; that on the left holds a bag and represents the God of Wealth; a tiny child counting the money at so early an age seems to be already following in the father's footsteps.

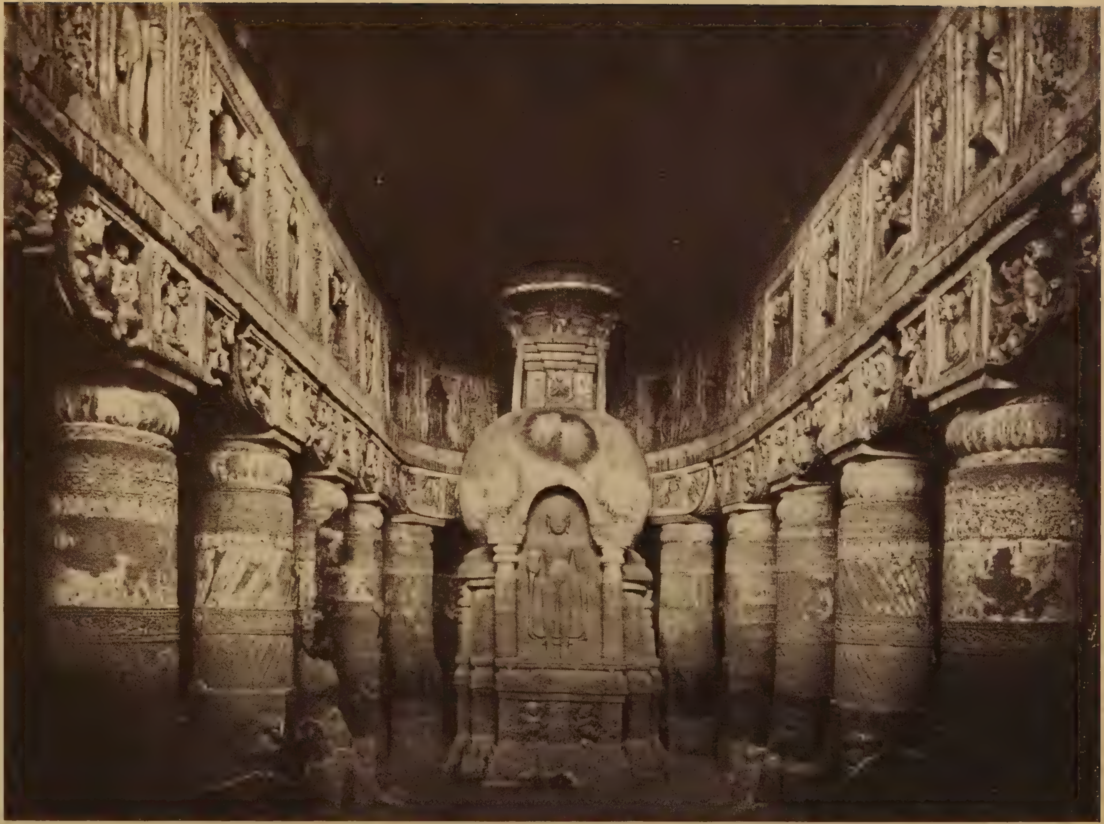
Inside, in the nave, there are fifteen columns about fifteen feet high. At the square bases of these pillars are some small figures on the corners. These pillars support a bracket capital, each richly sculptured with a sitting Buddha in the centre, and elephants, or two riders, or tigers, or flying figures on the brackets. Elaborate sculptures over the capitals give great richness of effect to the interior of this cave. They appear to be symbolic of Buddhism, and each composition is a legend.

The whole of the interior was once covered with a thin coating of white plaster, so as to hide the surface of the rock entirely; but in spite of this the sculptors worked with great pains to produce elaborate carving. There is not much variety in the sculptures of the triforium belt itself. These consist of alternate sitting or standing figures of Buddha, the sitting ones all cross-



A NAGA-KING, QUEEN, AND ATTENDANT.

CAVE 19.



INTERIOR OF CAVE 19.

legged,—the only variety being in the position of the hands, every different attitude of which has an important meaning attached to it. Between each of these seated Buddhas stands a figure in the usual attitude of exposition, and the attitude in all is very nearly the same, and yet no two figures are exactly alike.

A great dome rises eight feet. Its ribs are made of stone, and between every fourth and fifth rib is carved a tiger's head. A most gorgeously wrought stupa stands opposite the main door, which has a bas-relief of a standing Buddha, and on the top of the stupa are three umbrellas in stone one above the other.

The roof of the aisle is flat and has been painted with ornamental flower scrolls, Buddhas and stupas, and on the walls have been paintings of Buddha as well as attendants, the upper two rows sitting and the third mostly standing, showing halos behind the heads.

The arrangement for the lighting of the interior of this cave is simply wonderful. The daylight introduced through one great opening in the façade throws a brilliant light on the altar, the principal object, and also upon the capitals of the pillars, exactly where it is most wanted. The spectator himself stands in the shade. The light on the floor is subdued and the roof and the aisles fade into comparative gloom. The porch at the back of the court under the great arched windows still stands. The five pillars on each side of the nave separate the aisle from it, and five more run round the stupa.

This cave contains many painted Buddhas in the aisles, and a few others with figures of chaityas still remain on the roof. The roof of the front aisle contains some exquisite panels, and those of the side aisles are painted in a rich floriated pattern.

Temple 19 at Ajanta remains one of the great architectural triumphs of the world. The next cave, 20, is a small bihara, or monastery, with two gorgeously carved columns in front of the baranda. They have brackets attached to their capitals, and there is a charming statuette of a woman under a canopy of foliage. The sculptures of these is bold and free, much resembling those in cave 19. The sides of the steps to the baranda level are carved with beautiful decorative designs of river snakes, known as maharas. The ceiling of the baranda is hewn in imitation of wooden beams and rafters which remind one of caves 16 and 17. At each end of the baranda is a cell.

The hall has no columns. The size is twenty-eight feet wide, twenty-six feet long and about thirteen feet high.

The roof is supported only by the walls and the front of the ante-chamber, which advances about seven feet into the cave and has in front two columns, surmounted by seven carved figures of Buddha and attendants.

The image of Buddha in the shrine has once been painted with deep Indian red. Perhaps this was done at a much later date by some less religious artists.

It seems very much as though this cave was used as a chapter-house for this last group of caves. The interior is very dark, but is dry and keeps an equable temperature all the year round.

The whole of this cave at one time was painted, but now, except for fragments on the roof, all have disappeared. These fragments consist of flowers and interlaced designs.

From this cave we descend, and then descend again by a steep path for a considerable distance along the face of the scarp.

CHAPTER TEN

ADVENTURES—PLEASANT AND OTHERWISE

From very early morning until late into the night I worked. By day I copied the parts of the walls that were well lit, and by night those that were always dark; thus I economised both in petrol and my eyesight. Life resolved itself into work, eating and sleeping, and escapes from seen and unseen foes.

Every morning when I went down to the stream for my ablutions I found the footprints of tigers, panthers and wolves, which had come down to drink at night, and it was interesting to see the little ones' footprints with them. Why these animals never hurt me I do not know. Perhaps they had become Buddhist and sympathised with my work.

In the autumn the colours changed to glorious browns and reddish golds, and red blossoms spread like flames on the hills; gradually the trees dropped their leaves and the whole forest became bare, and it seemed all waiting in silent prayer for the coming Spring.

As the sun went down old vultures came to their rocky nests by the waterfalls and owls hooted through the night. The opposite hill gave me a living picture of animal and bird life at all times of the day. Peacocks could be seen everywhere in the jungle, by the stream, on the rocks and trees, and their harsh squeaking voice echoed from one side to the other of the hills. The very first peacock I saw at Ajanta was sitting towards nightfall on a black rock which pierced the white sky. By slow degrees it descended to the stream at the end of the hill to drink water.

One night I entered one of the less-explored caves; a very large unfinished one, which was hardly ever cleaned and smelt stale and terrible, while water leaked through the ceiling. The hall was of great extent, and thick columns rose to the ceiling, gorgeously carved and decorated. The atmosphere was fearful and solemn. I felt I was not alone. As I advanced into the middle, with my petrol lamp in my hand, there was a whirr of wings, and hundreds of swallows began to fall, dazed at the light, striking my head and body and tumbling to the ground. Bats, too, were flying about. The ground and all round me was so thick with these black rock swallows that I was afraid of treading upon them, and could not work in that cave by night.

Another evening, about twilight, just as I was getting ready for my little supper of curry and rice which Buddhu Miya was preparing, I heard a crash, and in front of me fell a big heavy stone! Almost immediately another followed, and had I been just two or three feet farther forward I should have been killed that evening by these fragments of rock. I was startled, and asked my servant: "What is all this? What does it mean? Is it an earthquake?" He also was quite dumbfounded.

A little later we went by the side of the caves to see what was above my cave and on the top of the hills. The sides of these caves ascend like a straight wall, and when we came out we saw that there were hundreds of monkeys quarrelling and fighting each other along the top of the hills.

My danger may have resulted from accident, but I think the little beasts had seen me, and it was not just chance that had sent those stones so near to my head.

My servant pointed to the sky and said: "Look," and I saw the advance of heavy threatening clouds. He then explained that there would be a mighty storm that night, and the wild monkeys, knowing this, came along from the jungle to get shelter for the night in these caves. Of course there was no door to my cave. I slept without protection of any kind, it was open to whatever animal or bird chose to come in.

But although monkeys do not live in caves they were searching for safe corners between the plain rocks and in the recesses of carved columns where they could cling out of reach of their natural enemies, the prowling hyenas and tigers.

They turned up that night, but behaved very well, and after all no one likes to get wet, so there they stayed. But the monkeys, although annoying, were not so dangerous as some of my other enemies, both tinier and larger, and the tiny ones were poison bees.

On one occasion as I was passing from cave 10 to another with my petrol lamp in my hand, my head was suddenly surrounded by a swarm of bees. There are many combs of wild bees hanging on the roof of these caves. Once a year the village people come to collect honey. They gather a special kind of leaf from certain jungle trees, and making a fire of them create a smoke which worries the bees. They are so sensitive to the smell of the smoke that at once they try to eat up their honey, and millions of them, producing a dark cloud, fly miles away to avoid the smell. Then the people collect what is left of the honey to sell in the market. I had unconsciously enacted the part of the honey-gatherers and the bees smelling the fumes of my petrol lamp thought their enemies were near and began to come down. All I could do was to run, for if attacked they were most deadly, and it is said that sometimes they are so poisonous that the sting of one is enough to kill an elephant.

The chowkhidars of the caves told me that once an official of the Nizam's Government came to inspect the caves. He was passing along outside cave 10, quite carelessly puffing away at a cigar, when down came a swarm of bees and stung his bald head. Then he grew absolutely frantic and ran towards the stream shouting for help; but the faster he ran and the angrier he became, the more the bees kept stinging. In desperation, he plunged into the water. Thereupon these chowkhidars rushed out to his rescue, wrapped him in rugs, and, since his head was badly swollen, carried him to the village.

The only moment I felt really scared was one night towards the end of my long and lonely life in the caves. It was just before midnight. The outside of the cave was fairly bright with the stars above. I had been to bed early and was sleeping peacefully in my little cot when something made me wake up, and I found myself sitting up in strained attention. Something was going to happen! Sure enough it did.

Very slowly a great dark shape passed in front of my cave; I watched eagerly to know what it was. It went gradually on. I thought; "I hope I am not dreaming," and rubbed my eyes and looked again. From the right-hand side of the caves another shape followed the first, only much bigger. It must have been four or five feet long and about four feet high. When it came in front of where I was sitting up motionless, it seemed to be looking straight at me! I saw two spots of light like eyes, and then they turned and directed themselves away and passed into the jungle. It was a huge tiger!

My servant was lying asleep like a log in the left-hand corner of the cave. I was terribly frightened, but the fear of losing him altogether prevented me from giving a true version of my experience. I just described the beast as a "jackal or something." I thought if he knew the truth he might run away from me altogether. The next morning I was able to trace a regular catwalk down to the torrent bed by which these animals went to and fro. It passed along the terrace outside of my cave, but three or four yards from where I used to sleep. After that Buddhu Miya and I used to collect huge logs of wood from the jungle every evening to build a great fire on the terrace.

Sometimes, late into the night, I copied the frescoes in the caves which I had selected beforehand. After supper was my time to study and to wander round the caves to amuse myself.

The paintings in these caves were not necessarily the work of one artist, but of many, some of whom were most probably the monks themselves. Of course, the best walls were given to the best artists.

Among the Hindus round about the village of Ajanta the story goes that once the gods and goddesses, tired of the monotony of heaven, and desiring to refresh themselves with a little excitement, begged leave to go down to earth for one night to enjoy themselves. So earnestly did they entreat Indra, God of Heaven, that in compassion he granted their request, with the condition, however, that they should return before the cock's first crow, otherwise they would be shut out from heaven for ever.

Then the gods and goddesses came down swiftly to the earth, dancing and singing for joy, and no sooner did they see the splendid gorge near Ajanta than they chose it for the site of their one night's entertainment. Busily they hollowed out of the hillside, halls and chambers and so thoroughly enjoyed themselves that they forgot the time limit; but, alas, they were startled by the cock's crow, and the king of heaven's curse fell upon them, and so they transformed themselves into beautiful sculptures and paintings. Never again could they return to heaven, but were forced to remain on earth for ever.

The poor illiterate people are so ignorant that they do not even know that these caves are Buddhist monasteries; but connect them with this legend. However, the villagers have always known of the existence of the caves, and from very ancient times, once a year, they still hold a traditional fair down by the stream below the caves, where priests, men, women and children can visit the caves, and spend one day of the year in an entirely different way from all the rest, about the end of November.

One early morning, near cave 1, I began to hear a noise of people and rumble of bullock carts. As it was impossible for the carts to go farther, the people approached gradually towards the source of the stream. All day long Hindu people were arriving from everywhere around, sometimes from as many as thirty miles away, starting for the festival even two or three days before.

They began to settle in the valley and to bathe in the stream, afterwards putting on fresh gorgeously-coloured clothes, red, green, purple and yellow, and then went into the temples. The priests each took charge of three or four caves, in order to show to the pilgrims the images of Buddha sitting cross-legged in the shrine, at whose feet or into whose lap they gave offerings of flowers, fruit, a little rice, small earthenware lamps, and money. As soon as one batch of worshippers had passed out the priest would take the food and money into his own keeping.

Meanwhile, below in the ravine, as the sun went higher up in the sky, a little noisy bazaar gradually sprang up, with small stalls for selling food, sweetmeats, flowers, fruits, clothes, earthenware lamps, toys and reed pipes for children.

Throughout the whole day a continuous stream of people came and went to and from the caves, others bathed and worshipped, cooked and ate, reclined, slept or sang by the stream. The fair lasted until the fall of day, when the people gradually deserted the ancient shrines, leaving the valley once more lonely and still.

It happened one day that while I was examining closely the colossal image of Buddha in cave 16 and was feeling the smoothness of his arms, I felt something hard sticking up in the joint of one of the arms. Feeling rather curious, I dug it out of the accumulated dirt with a penknife and found it to be a heavy thick piece of metal, which, on being brought to the light, appeared to be a coin, apparently very ancient.

Some time later, professors from Calcutta University came for a short visit to the caves. I showed them the coin, and they, with much excitement, told me it might be a very early Buddhist coin. When it had been cleaned, however, it proved to be an early Mahomedan coin, about five hundred years old. Evidently some Hindu pilgrim had placed it as an offering in the hand of Buddha.

This goes to prove that even in those early days the caves were known to the Hindus, who used to come and worship there, but not to the Mahomedans, who would otherwise have destroyed the whole place, as they did destroy other caves and temples in India.

Occasionally a few Hindu people come to fish in the deep lake at the bottom of the falls or to gather wood and wild fruits in the jungle around the ravine, and then they wander into the caves. It is astonishing to see that their faces and features, simple movements, and simplicity of nature are exactly like these old paintings, especially resembling the frescoes in caves 9 and 10.

The hillside was always covered with wild fruits and flowers; but now, in the autumn fragrant siuly-flowers bloomed all along the wayside, over the boulders and in amongst the pomegranates, grapes and rich ripe berries. So fragile were they that at the first touch of the sun the white petals and orange stems drooped. I was reminded of the far-gone days when the simple monks lived chiefly on the fruits and vegetables they grew, of which these I saw were the faint wild traces.

In the stream and all along its banks are scattered millions of little diamond-shaped stones, black, vermilion red, and yellow. One feels a great desire to collect them. It was this rock-colour with which the artists of Ajanta used to paint their frescoes. In Sanskrit literature is this reference to rock colour: "His companion picks up from the ground pieces of clay or stone of different colours,—blue, yellow, red, brown and grey." But this crude material was known not only in those times, but even to-day among the Indian village artists it is used for executing huge images of gods and goddesses. In Bengal such artists have shewn me their lampblacks, their glues and their rice waters and their numerous rock colours. The rich Indian red (known as Geri-mati) can be bought by chunks for a penny or two in the bazaar. The glue is obtained by boiling the tamarine seed.

From various references in old Sanskrit writings it is known that wall painting was exceedingly common in India from very ancient times, all the rich people having their walls decorated with frescoes. And even up till to-day this traditional art has survived, though in rather a decadent way; so that paintings of elephants, hunting tigers, soldiers on horseback, mythological gods and goddesses, a parrot on an apple tree, and two bulls or goats fighting one another are found on the fronts, backs and sides of houses, as well as alpana designs, which every Indian woman knows and with which, using the tips of her fingers, in a few hours she can cover a large wall or floor.

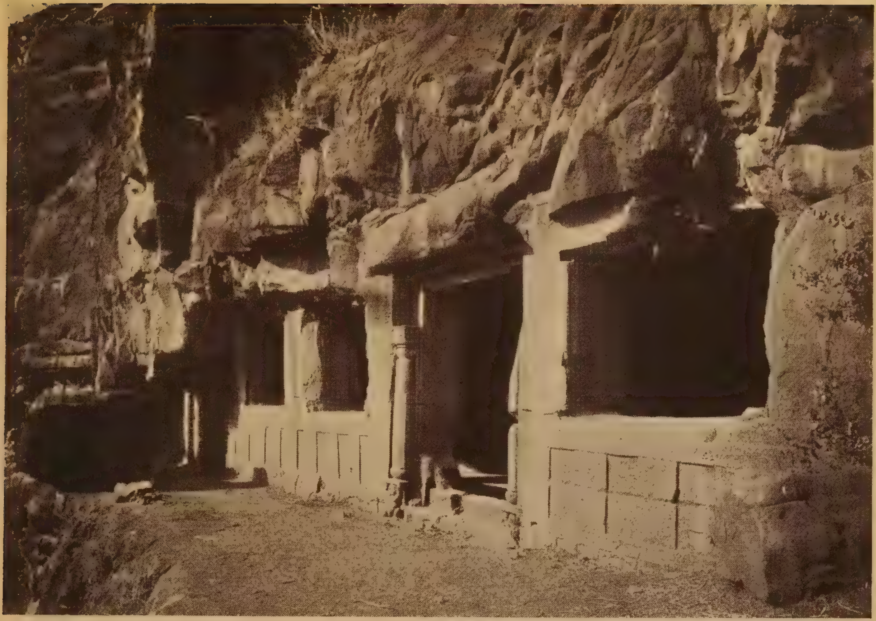
CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FINEST PERIOD OF INDIAN ART

During the years from the third century to the sixth century A.D., another group of caves was cut out on the eastern side of the hill and to the right of the caves of the first period. These six caves are now numbered 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. All day it is impossible to see clearly within them, so dark are they; but at evening, just before the sun sinks in the west, they light up, and the frescoes glow on the walls. They fall into the third group of excavations in the Ajanta series.

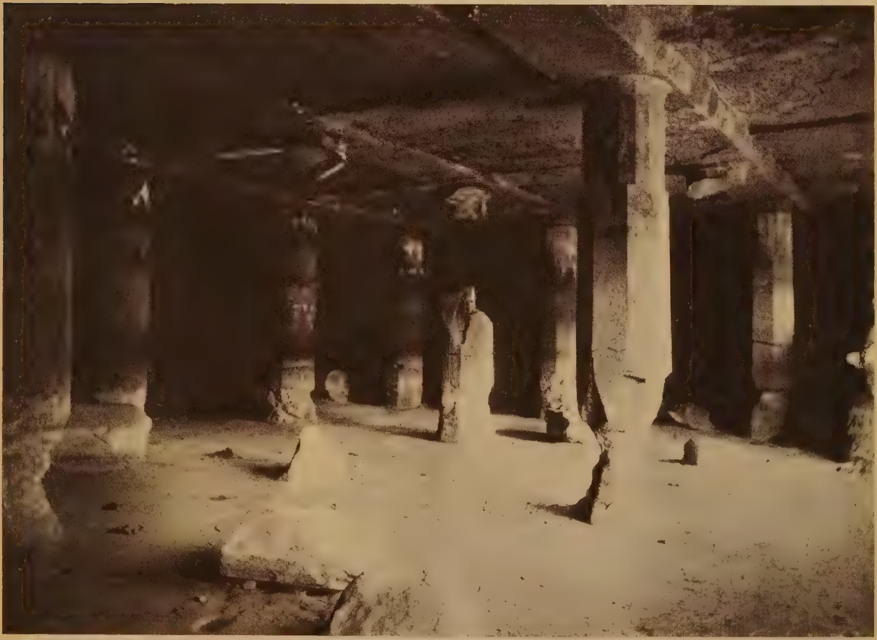
Cave 6.—This bihara cave 6 is the only one here at Ajanta which has two storeys, but has, unfortunately, been excavated in a spot where the rock is not so sound as in other places. In consequence of this, the baranda of the upper storey has fallen down, and the interior has a damp and ruined aspect not common in cave architecture.

The halls of both storeys are of about the same dimensions, fifty-three feet square. There are four large windows which light the halls, and the stone wall under them is panelled to give the effect of wood. The upper storey has twelve pillars. In the lower, four more are introduced in the centre.

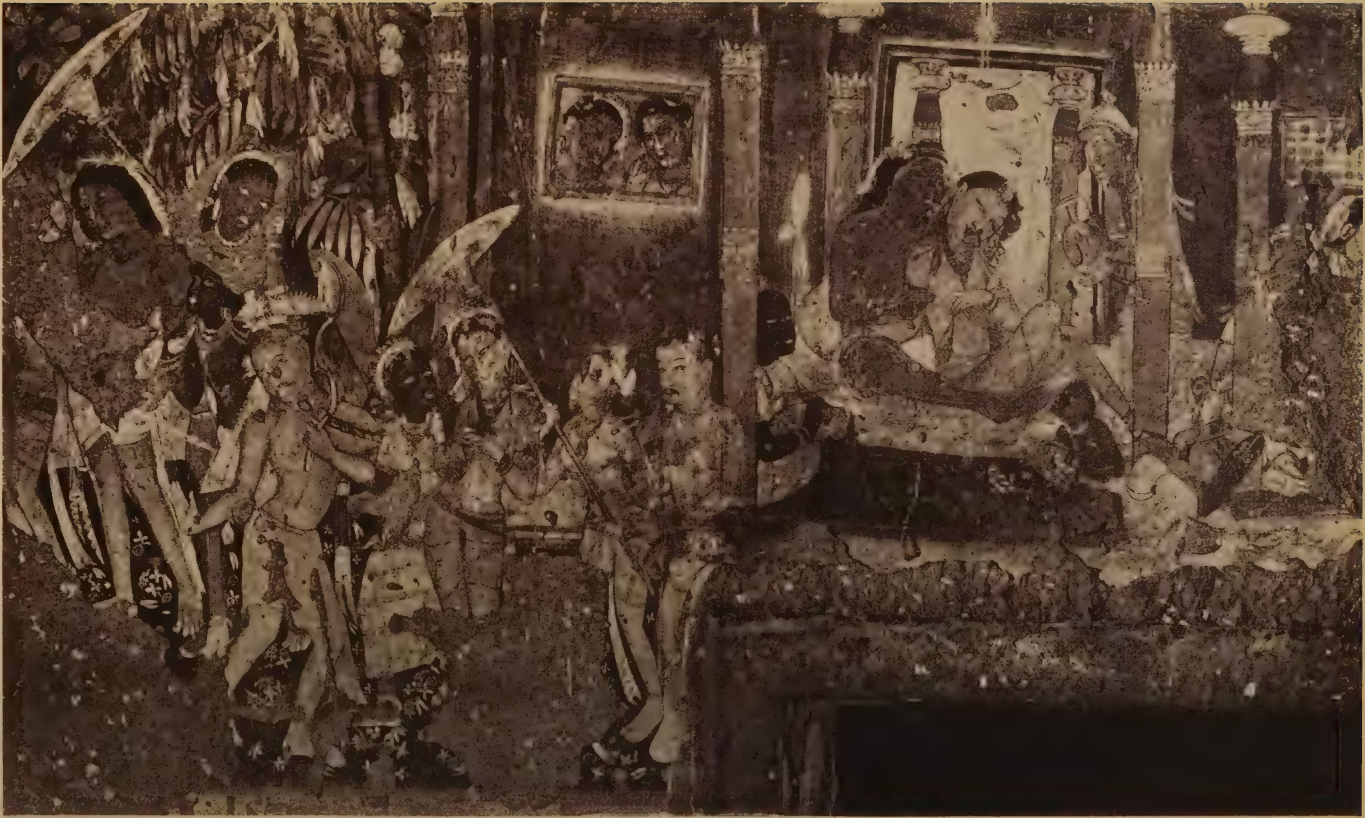


FAÇADE OF THE LOWER STOREY.

Cave 6.



INTERIOR OF CAVE 6.



ROYAL LOVE SCENE.

Cave 17.

In the façade, on each side of the doorway, in the upper corner there must surely once have been two carved figures, but these have now fallen away. Local mendicants lived in this cave and made fires, which did much damage to the interior and the paintings on the walls and ceilings therein.

Out of the sixteen pillars in the lower hall, only a few now remain standing. The others collapsed because of the mud which covered the lower parts and caused them to weaken and crumble away. Not these pillars alone have given way, but also masses of stone from the ceiling have fallen.

The stair in the front aisle leading to the upper storey has been broken away below, but is still connected with the baranda above. This baranda was originally supported by two fine columns and four pilasters. Above the landing are many small Buddhas carved on the wall, and two stupas.

Outside the baranda in the upper storey are small chapels with sculptured Buddhas. There are also at each end of the baranda small chambers with carved pillars ; no doubt these were specially built for the living apartments of the high priests. Inside these chambers there are rooms large enough for consultations and other purposes.

Opposite the central space at each side and at the end of the left aisle are chambers with pillars in front, each leading to an inner cell. There are also three cells on each side and one at the end of the right aisle. The shrine contains the usual statue of Buddha.

The ante-chamber is quite large and has a colossal figure of Buddha on each side of the shrine door. The shrine contains the usual statue of Buddha with two antelopes on the front of the throne.

This cave also has been painted, but the paintings have almost entirely disappeared. It has also a larger number of sculptures of Buddhas than any other bihara at Ajanta.

The few fragments of painting on the back wall of the lower storey and in the ante-chamber are so smoked that nothing can be made out of them, except a large palace scene and Indra-like figures on both sides of the shrine.

The upper storey has been painted, but this has almost entirely disappeared. The front of the chapel in the right end of the front aisle still retains fragments of the painting, and inside the walls have been covered with painted Buddhas. In the left chapel in front, on each side of the cell-door, is a painted Drabirian building, a bihara, on the inside of the baranda roof of which is a circular ornament, with strings of pearls hanging from it, and inside the bihara is a seated Buddha.

The lower storey of cave 6 has its pillars arranged in different formation from that in the later Ajanta caves, where there would have been twelve round a square. Here they are arranged in four rows of four each, sixteen in all, and without capitals or sculpture.

Great pains were taken with the statues of Buddha; one in the small chamber to the right of the first floor of cave 6 is covered with a layer of the finest plaster, one eighth of an inch thick, so painted and polished that the face has the smoothness and sheen of porcelain.

This is the earliest cave of the third group and probably it dates from 450 A.D. to 550 A.D.

Now we pass on to cave 4, the largest bihara in the whole series of twenty-nine caves at Ajanta. The next largest is cave 24.

It is situated higher up in the cliff than 3, and probably a little higher than the next three at this end of the hill. Simple grandeur gives it a wonderfully beautiful appearance.

The façade is covered with eight plain octagonal figure-pillars. The huge baranda, ninety feet long by sixteen feet wide, is supported by severe octagonal pillars with bracket capitals. At each end is a small room, ten feet by eight feet, reached by three steps, which were probably chambers for guests or for the keeper of the cave.

In the wall at the back of the baranda the central door is sculptured instead of painted, which is unusual at Ajanta. The reason is that at the later date of this excavation artists were not content with painting, but felt an irresistible impulse to a more plastic form of decoration. Unfortunately, this door has been damaged up to a height of two feet, the floor of the cave having for long been filled with earth. However, the decoration on the wall each side is still unharmed. Here are depicted fascinating scenes of men and women, making merry, stories about lions, bulls, monkeys, goats rampant and elephants, and also, on the right side, a large standing relief of Buddha, a prince, young, strong and beautiful.

The square windows are charmingly carved with delicate whirling foliage, and among it a few female figures and chubby babies.

The hall is eighty-seven feet square, supported by twenty-eight columns of the same plain style as those of the baranda. At each end of the aisle is a cell. The ceiling looks rough, as though a layer of rock had fallen off; but here, and nowhere else in the cave, are traces of painting in brilliant colours. The ante-chamber, twenty-one feet by thirteen feet, has two standing Buddhas at each end of its wall and on either side of the shrine door are two similar figures.

Cave 3.—This cave, a small bihara placed high up on the western top of the crescent hill, dating from the seventh century, was never completed; in fact, only the baranda was blocked out. The baranda is about twenty-nine feet by seven feet, and supported by four pillars and two pilasters. A rough entrance has been made into the hall, but there has been scarcely any excavation.

Cave 5.—This is another bihara cave, at the same level as Number 6, possessing no peculiarity and never quite finished. We may assume it to be of about the same date as cave 6.

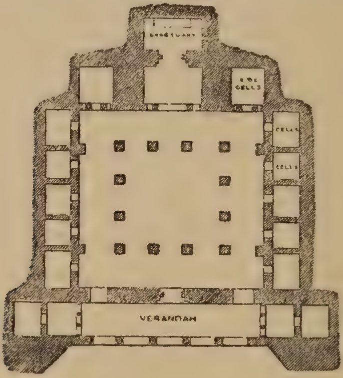
The baranda is over forty-five feet long by about nine feet wide, with four front pillars; but only one—that on the right side of the entrance—is finished, quite plainly in the same style as those of neighbouring cave, 4, only much shorter and with a square base to the bottom.

The door of this cave is rather interesting, with its many carved standing figures of Buddha and attendants and pairs of seated figures. Windows have been cut out but never finished.

No doubt the rock here was found unsuitable for excavation, and therefore the whole cave was left unfinished.

Cave 2.—The second cave, one of the latest of the series, is similar to but smaller than its neighbour, cave 1. It is one of the cave most notable for its richness in fresco paintings, which are marvellously preserved, in spite of their exposed position.

The baranda, slightly over forty-six feet in length, is supported in front by four pillars and two pilasters of massive proportions, all with similarly elegant designs; so fine and delicate indeed are the ornamentations that they would seem more suited to metal work than to stone. At either end of the baranda in front of the two principal cells stands a small porch, the difference in height being made up by bas-reliefs representing scenes from the life of Buddha. A chapel-room leads from each porch.



PLAN OF CAVE 2

Between the hall and the baranda is a finely decorated door, at the bottom of which are several guards, apparently holding flowers ; covering them are snake-canopies. Above this are numerous pairs of standing figures, male and female, carved in various attitudes. The cave has two windows placed opposite to the side aisle formed by the richly-carved columns in the hall.

One is a little taken aback on entering the hall to find it so dark and redolent of bats. Its dimensions are only about forty-eight feet square and eleven feet high. The twelve pillars supporting the roof are rich in carving and some have fat four-armed dwarfs at the corners of the capitals.

In the sanctuary is a statue ; of course, of Buddha. On either side of it, at the end of the aisles, is a chapel cell filled with marvellous sculpture. In the one on the north sit two most portly figures, the female has a child on her knees and is amusing it with a toy. In the south chapel two male figures occupy a like position.

The beauty of this cave is due to the paintings, especially those on the ceilings. For the most part they are only decorative scrolls and patterns ; but so appropriately placed as to give an extremely finished look to the cave ; in fact, the effect and arrangements of a complete bihara can be better understood from this cave than from any other at Ajanta. A very great deal of the painting still remains. In the baranda the pattern on the wall can be easily followed.

Inside, the ceilings of the great hall and aisles, the ante-chamber, shrine, and chapels are all admirably designed, and though, especially in the hall, blackened with smoke, they contain many striking examples of floral decorations, Naga and flying figures, and others with human and animal heads, but the lower extremities ending in scroll work.

It is the only cave that retains any fragments of painting in the shrine, the ceiling being especially fine.

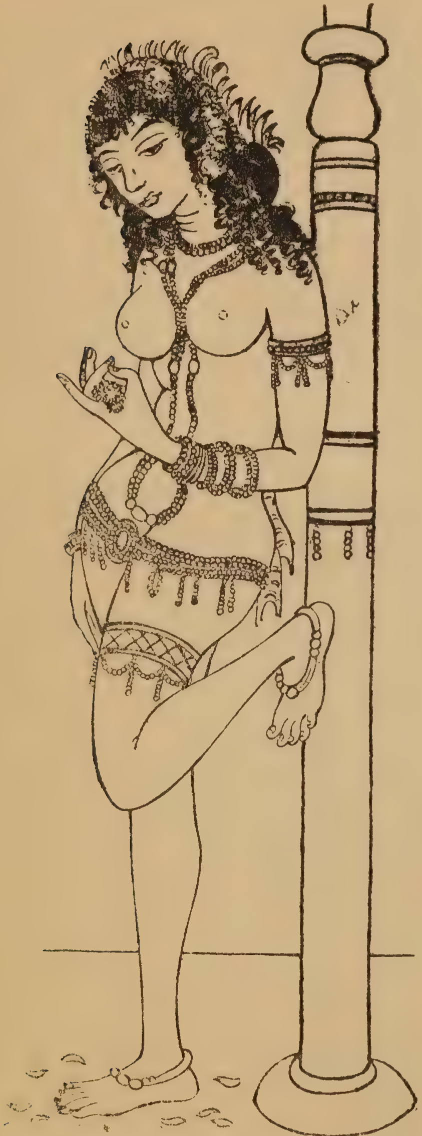
The painting in the two chapels is of a yellower tone than most of the other wall paintings, and is filled with standing figures, many of them women, some with aureoles round their heads, and is possibly of later date than the rest, probably of the seventh century. On the right wall of the hall is one of the most interesting groups of pictures now left, one of the scenes between the second and third cell doors below being the retinue of a raja. He sallies forth on a large elephant with the umbrella of state over his head, and the ankusa, or goad, in his hand ; behind him is an attendant with the chatra (or umbrella) ; at his side goes a smaller elephant, with a rider now defaced, and before it walks a man with a laden bag on his back. In front, advance to the left five horses, two of them green, the men on the green horses looking back at the Raja. There are also fourteen men on foot, of whom eleven seem to be soldiers, carrying oblong shields, and three carrying round ones stamped with huge grinning Gorgon faces. Two above on the extreme left have swords in scabbards, nine others have Nepal swords known as khukri or dabiyasms, but very long; two other men play flutes, and one beats a drum (dhak and dhole).

Between the first and second cell doors is represented, with a conventionalism worthy of the Chinese, a river with many fish and shells in it. A boat with three masts, a job sail, and an oar behind, and filled towards the stern with ten matkas, or earthenware jars, carries a man in it with long hair, who is praying. In the heaven behind Chandra, the moon, a figure with a crescent behind him, is represented as descending, followed by another figure. A naga-raja and his wife in the water seem to draw the boat back; and below is represented in the water another figure, with a human head and long tail. On the left, in the direction of the boat's course, is Buddha on the shore and a figure worshipping him. Rocks are conventionally painted. The upper part of this wall is covered with interesting scenes.

The long panels of the ceiling in cave 2, dating from about A.D. 600, offer well-preserved examples of charming floral decorations in blue. The circular panels are very fine, the figures in the spandrils being particularly good and full of movement. The individual figures are remarkable for clever drawing, the artist having apparently gone out of his way to invent specially difficult poses; a woman prostrating herself, and snake-hooded nagas, or water-sprites, are good examples. The woman standing with her left leg bent up is a capital piece of draughtsmanship, the feet being as well drawn as the hands, and the woman in the swing is pleasing and life-like.

In the left hand cell are fragments of a long painted inscription in small letters on a dark green ground, and scattered over the cave on the paintings are seven or eight inscriptions. The character of the letters is sixth or seventh century, that is to say, probably later than the excavation of the cave. Generally the inscriptions refer to the names of kings, the Goddess of Learning, and disciples of Buddha.

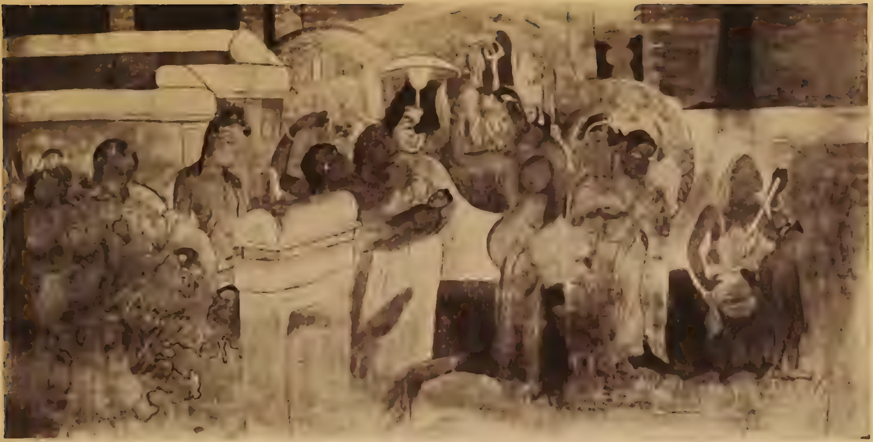
In cave 2, on the right-hand side of the wall, there is a famous picture of a king threatening one of his beautiful court dancers.



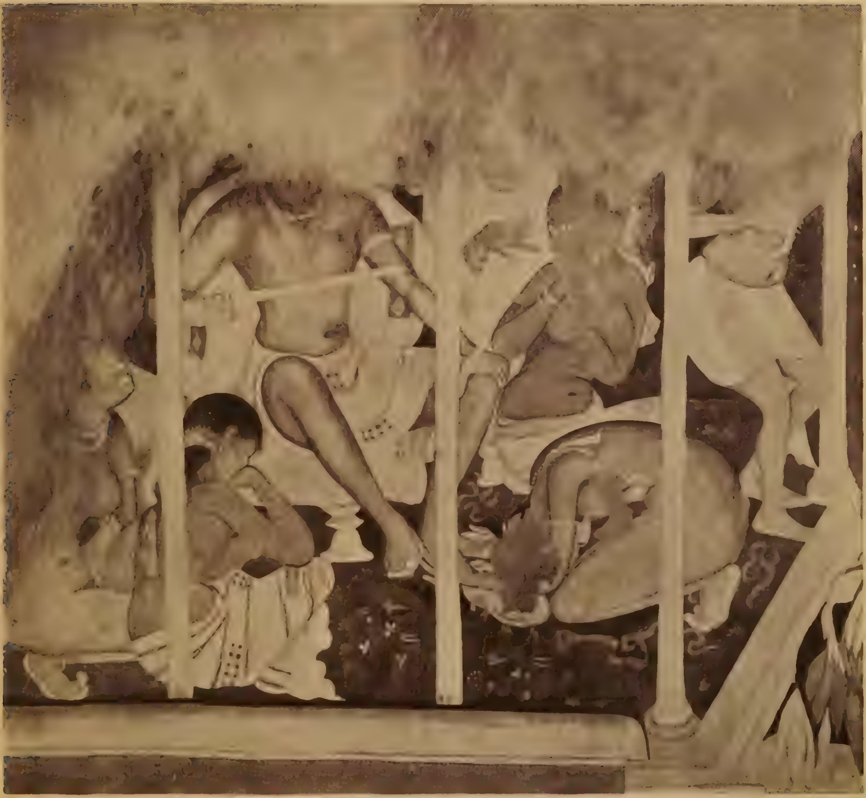
A FIGURE FROM A PAINTING IN CAVE 2

One day Buddha was passing along the king's mango groves beyond the palace when the king, who was hostile to Buddha's preaching, sent his most beautiful dancing girl of the court to tempt him from the path he had chosen. But she instead, no sooner saw him, than she fell worshipping at his feet. So angry was the king when he knew that she had failed to tempt Buddha, that he threatened her with death. In the fresco the proud king is seen grasping his sword while before him in supplication kneels the dancing girl, and around them, weeping, are other women. Very strangely, damp has soaked into the painting in such a way that it is the king's head that is cut off.

THE MESSENGER IN CAVE 2

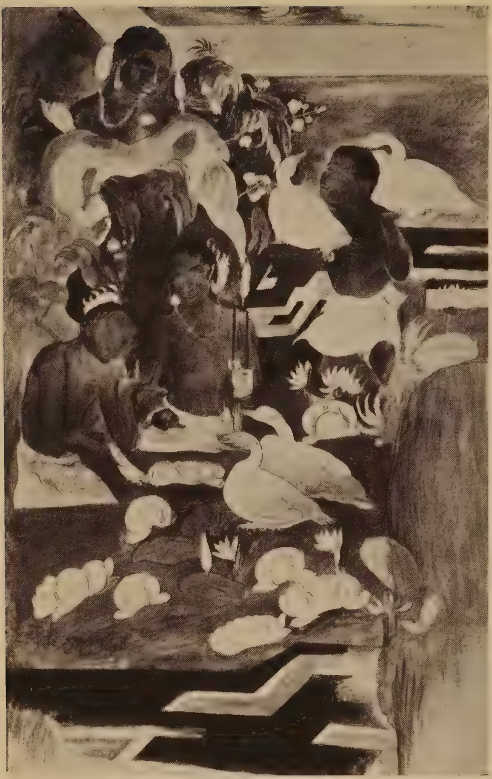


THE BIRTH OF BUDDHA.
CAVE 2.



A KING PUNISHING ONE OF HIS COURT DANCERS.
CAVE 2.

From copies in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esq., Bombay.



By permission of the India Society.

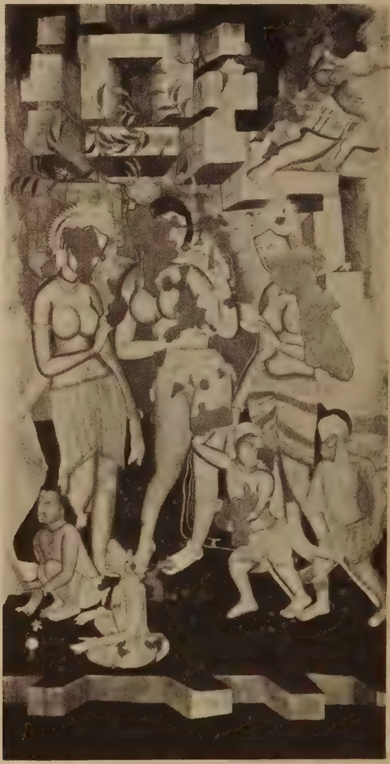
A LOTUS LAKE, WITH HUNTERS AND WILD GEESE.

CAVE 2.

A RICH LADY PREPARING TO VISIT BUDDHA.

CAVE 2.

From a copy in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esq., Bombay.



Next on the right of this fresco is depicted the story of a messenger telling the king of some great loss which he has sustained. The messenger is an old man, calm and self-possessed, but showing, through his troubled eyes, hopeless expression and, above all, the outspread palm, the need for absolute abandonment of hope which he wishes to convey to the king.

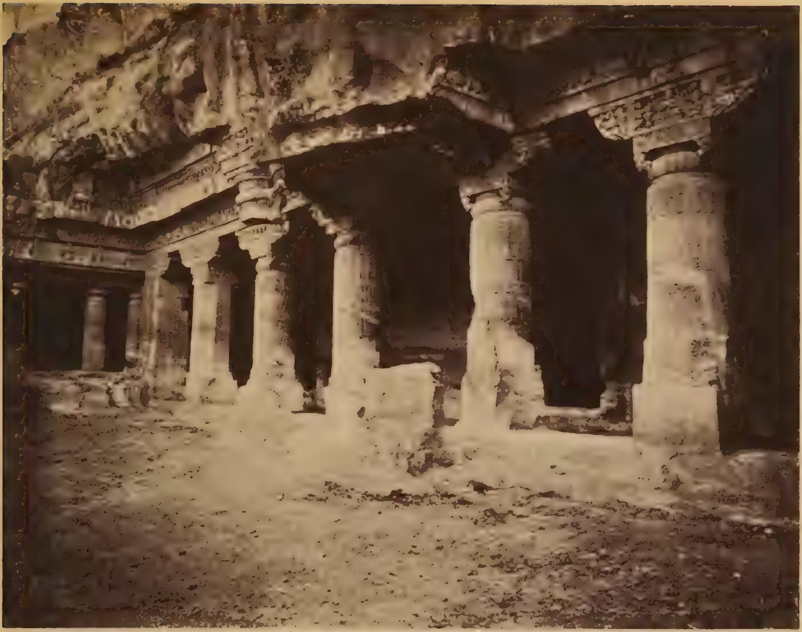
On the right hand wall of a dark cell by the side of the ante-chamber in cave 2, where no light can ever reach it, is a square painting of a rich lady, accompanied by women attendants, preparing to visit Buddha. Unfortunately I found it impossible to make a complete copy, as my paper was not large enough, therefore I had to content myself with the middle portion, leaving out some of the attendants and children. The scene of this painting was laid in the baranda of a house and shows the wood and stone architecture of those days, as do also the steps leading up to the ground in front. This ground is deep Indian red, a very common colour for earth in Ajanta frescoes, and it is sprinkled with blossoms from a creeper which twines into the window. Children are playing with hobby-horse and tops. The lady must have been a good and devoted follower of Buddha, for above, in the right-hand corner, hovers a boy deba. Her fine muslins were so frail that they have worn away, and she appears almost nude.

CAVE 1.—At the extreme right end of the crescent-moon hill here at Ajanta is cave 1, which was probably the last excavated of the series of twenty-nine caves.

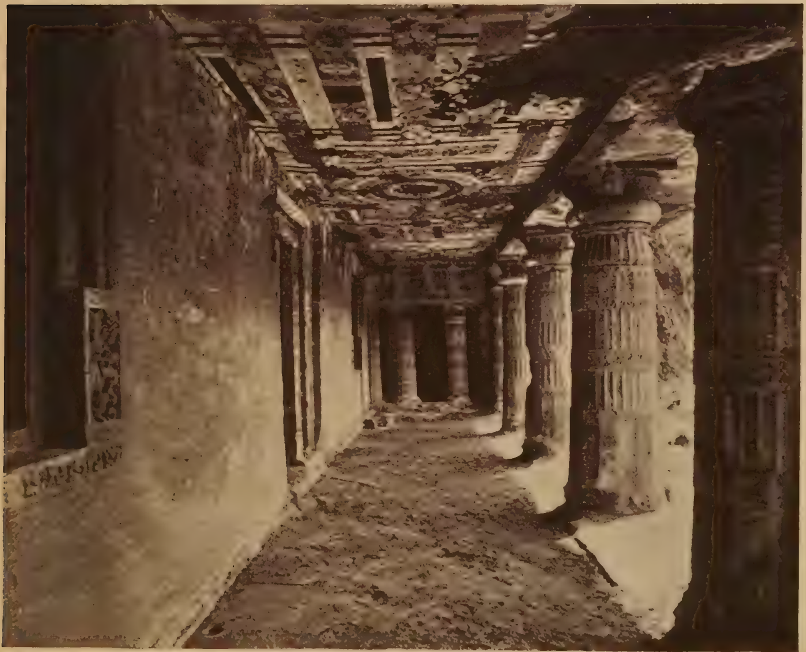
This bihara or conventual abode possesses the most highly ornamented and the handsomest exterior, and is filled with marvellous paintings. They are an example of the highest standard of Buddhist art in India—a standard so high that it has scarcely, if ever, been surpassed.

The façade of this cave is beautifully designed, the variety combined with sufficient uniformity for architectural purposes produces a great richness of effect. It is the only example here of a bihara decorated with sculpture.

In front of the baranda there has been a porch supported by two advanced columns, of which only fragments of the bases and elegant capitals, like those in cave 2 remain ; at each end, outside the baranda, there is a room whose open front is supported by two pillars, the floors being raised a few steps and the elaborate entablature of the façade is carried round the whole front at the same level. The room on the east opens into another, nearly thirteen and a half feet square, and almost completely dark ; that

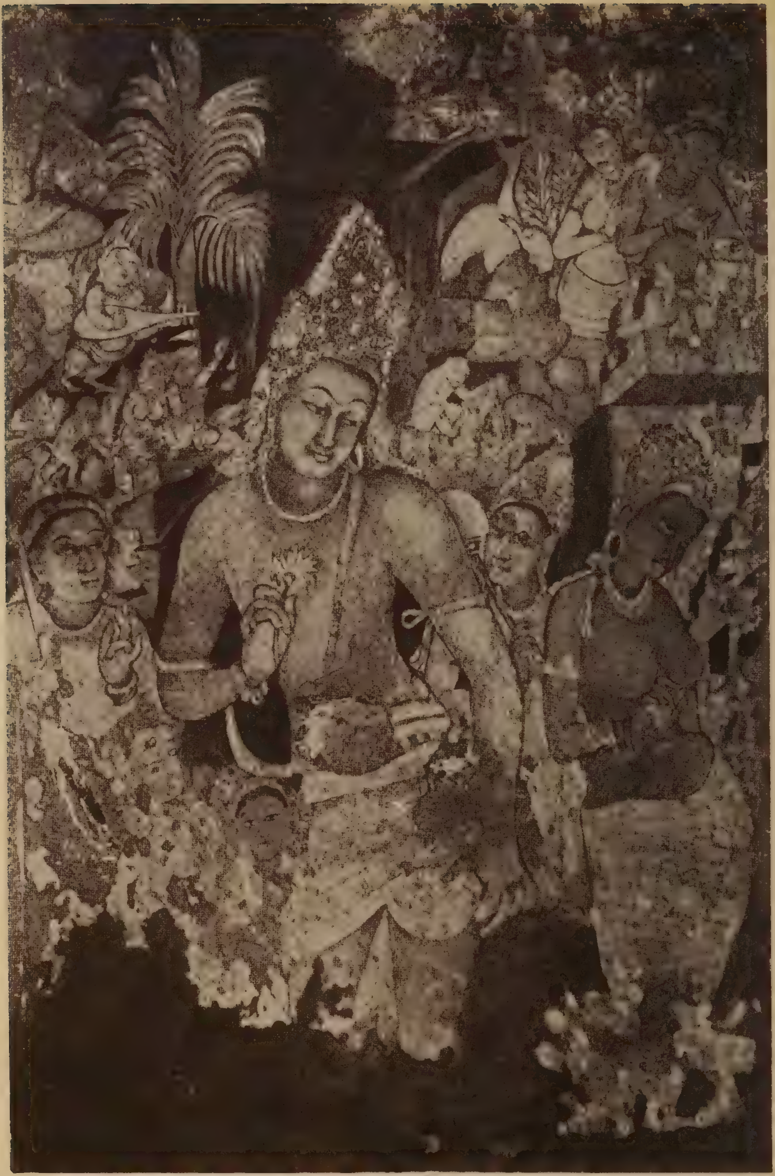


FAÇADE OF CAVE 1.



CEILING OF BARANDA.

Cave 2.



PRINCE GAUTAMA AND HIS WIFE YASHODHARA, WITH ATTENDANTS.
Cave I.

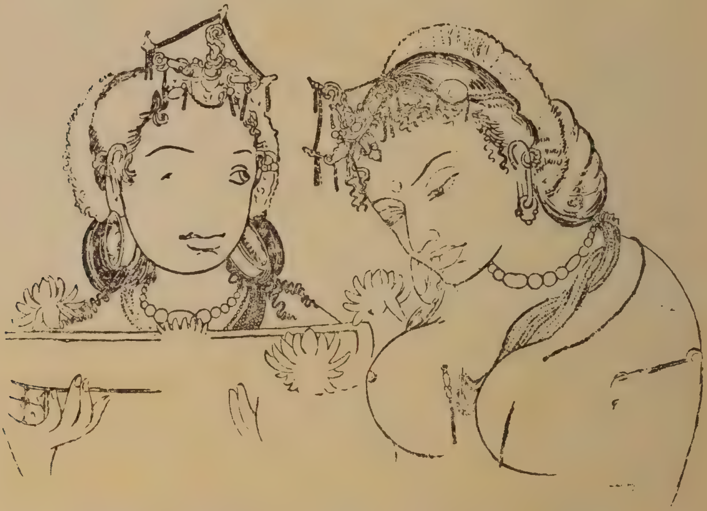
on the left opens into two others somewhat smaller.

The six pillars which support the baranda are of three or four different orders. The outer pillars are merely square piers; but they increase in richness from the flanks to the centre, where the circular shafts are elaborately ornamented and the capitals grandly bold; thus drawing the attention of the spectator towards the cave's main entrance.

The beautiful doorway was originally covered with thin white plaster, a great many traces of which still remain, and the carved figures and decorations round the door were also once coloured. It was sculptured in simple and subdued fashion, in order that the flat paintings on the walls might appear more harmonious and striking.

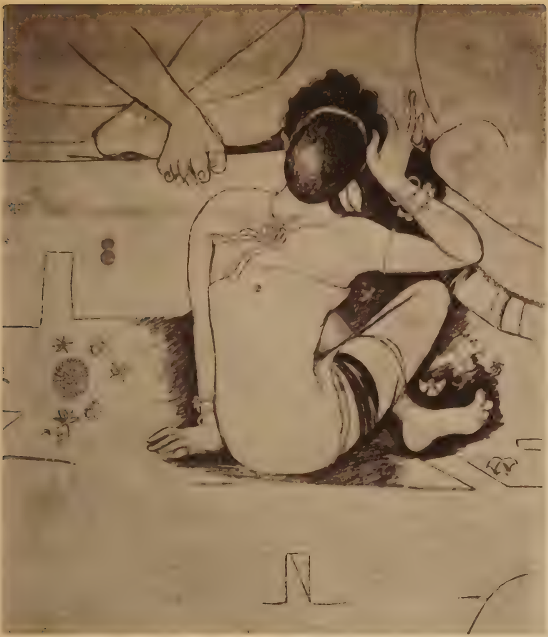
Cave 1 contains some of the greatest masterpieces in the world. On the left of the central shrine is the picture of Prince Gautama and his wife, Yashodhara. It is most likely their marriage. The prince holds in his hand a blue lily. The bridal crowns are such as are still used in India to-day.

In the upper part of the fresco Buddha is again painted in a love scene with Yashodhara on a much smaller scale. He appears to look down upon the futility of the world which is represented around him. Near by are two cranes, one is straining for flight, while the other settles contentedly upon the nest. Perhaps they symbolise the diverse feelings of Prince Gautama and Yashodhara.



FIGURES FROM A WALL PAINTING IN CAVE 1

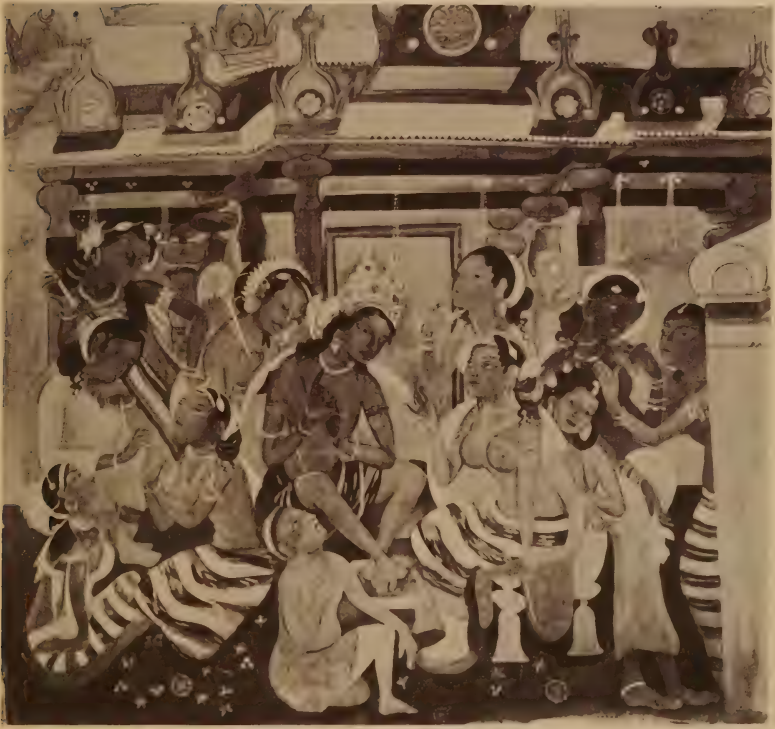
The prince is painted in a light flesh colour, quite golden, while Yashodhara is less noticeable and of a dull colour. Shadows have been stippled with blue. So wonderfully is the scene painted that, in spite of the varnish, the colour is still clear and vivid. Most probably the artist spent his life in thinking of the subject before he executed it boldly and with certainty. This



BACK VIEW OF A SEATED GIRL.

Cave I.

(*From a carbon tracing by Miss Doroth*
Larcher.)



A PALACE SCENE.

Cave I.

By permission of the India Society.

CEILING FRESCO.
Cave 1.

fresco is an example of the highest school of Buddhist art in India after a development which covered eleven hundred years.

Besides elaborate paintings such as these, the walls are covered with sketches in Indian red on a white ground. Nothing could be more fascinating, for one is enabled thereby to study the process of painting of the fresco from the first sketches to the finished masterpiece.

At Ajanta the artists not only depicted narrative by a series of continuous paintings but also by means of a single masterpiece. On the left of the ante-chamber, in cave 1, in a very dark place, is an example of this, the temptation of Buddha by Mara, a painting over twelve feet by ten feet (see plate facing page 72). The picture has been badly varnished and damaged, and might fall at any moment through its own weight. But one can still see that it is beautiful enough to rank with any masterpiece that the world has produced.

Under a bodhi-tree in the middle is seated Buddha, golden-robed, calm and self-possessed, his face unchanged by the temptations and horrors surrounding him, and his hand just touching the earth, to bear witness of this truth. In front is the beautiful Mara and, on either side of him, his most alluring daughters seek to tempt Buddha from his meditations and high purpose. All round horrible and fearful creatures are making desperate efforts to terrify him. Warriors slash at him with their long straight swords, threatening him with destruction, a sea-lion gnashes its jaws, one loathsome devil, with starting eyes and great black eyebrows, stretches his mouth with his fingers to a hideous length and from the mouth of another issues a snake, hissing. But Buddha sits tranquil and at perfect rest; as the lily that reposes on the placid waters, as the brightness of the flame; firm as the Mount Everest, so Bodhisatva was unmoved; even as the iron walls that surround the universe, his heart and mind are at perfect rest, without fear or anxiety, and entirely self-possessed.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MY LAST DAYS AT AJANTA

On the western side of the crescent-shaped hill the last series of caves, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 were excavated between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D.

As these face towards the east, they are bright with sunlight in the morning, but gradually become darker as the day wears on. Thus the sun shines into some of them in the morning and into others in the afternoon.

On the other side of the earliest group, or at the western tip of the moon's crescent, are the monastic halls numbered 1 to 6, most of which belong to the seventh century, and right opposite to them, at the other extremity, is the fourth group, standing apart from the other three and facing the setting sun.

This includes the biharas or colleges numbered 20 to 25, and the magnificent chaitya house 26, which are the last and most elaborate of the four groups; some of them remained unfinished.

Cave 21.—This large bihara cave 21 was cut considerably further along on the western side of the hill, just after the excavation of Number 2 on the east. It was richly carved; but has been largely destroyed by the streams which fall from above in the rainy season; the falling rocks have damaged the front, and the baranda has been gradually obliterated by deposits of mud and mossy vegetation due to the water.

At each end of the baranda is a small room raised three steps above the level of the floor with two carved pillars in front, over which is a sculptured frieze.

Between caves 20 and 21 the hill recedes a little, and here a great waterfall descends in the rainy season. The caves of this group, 21, 22, 23, 24, in the western hill, all greatly resemble the chapels in caves 1 and 2 of the eastern hill, and are arranged and finished in a similar style of rich ornamentation.

The hall measures fifty-one feet square and has chambers with pillared fronts in the middle and the ends of the side aisles, leading into a cell; besides which there are four other cells on each side of the cave. The pillars in front of the cells at the back are surmounted by some very good carvings. The roof of the hall is supported by twelve columns, ornamented in a style similar to those in cave 2.

The entrance to the ante-chamber is unfinished and the shrine possesses a huge figure of Buddha sitting cross-legged. There has been a great deal of painting here; but most of it has now gone.

The doorway that leads into this cave 21 is elegant, and clearly dates from the fifth or sixth century A.D.

Some pieces of the roof painting inside the hall are still distinct. The blues look as fresh as if they had just been put on, whereas they were done more than a thousand years ago. On the left wall are a few figures of Buddha and fair-skinned female figures. Not all the walls of this cave were painted, and it is very interesting to see how portions of ground made smooth for paintings still remain to be filled in with brush and paint.

CAVE 22.—Twenty-two is another small bihara just seventeen feet square with four unfinished cells. The whole cave has the appearance of being unfinished. There is no window; but a very pretty door and a narrow baranda, of which both pillars are broken.

In the sanctuary is an image of Buddha with his feet resting on the lotus, the Buddhist emblem of creative power. On the right side is a painting of seven Buddhas, each under his bodhi-tree and with his name painted beneath: as Bipasbi, Sikhi, Bissabhu . . . Kanaka Muni, Kasyapa, Sahya Muni, Maitreza, and the missing name might be Kakusanda. The Buddhist thinks:

"Whoever makes an image of Buddha becomes complete in beatitude, auspiciousness, and good qualities, and his splendour is brilliant through virtues and physical organs, and is delightsome to the eyes."

Similar inscriptions to those in cave 16 are found in the left end of the baranda of this cave 22. They are of eleven lines with only a few words in each line, written in Sanskrit, and reading something like this :—

"The meritorious gift of a mandapa by Jayata . . . . . of . . . . . family, a great Upasaka, great grandson of . . . grand son of . . . of Acharya Indra . . . son of Dharmahaga . . . . may the merit of this be for excellent knowledge to all sentient beings, beginning with father and mother, etc."

Cave 23.—This cave, a little below the level of cave 22, is another bihara, and about fifty-one feet square and over twelve feet high, with twelve pillars.

The four massive columns in the baranda, of a design most suitable to rock architecture, are still in pretty good condition. They are very similar to the pillars of cave 1 in the eastern hill, and especially so in the capital where four dwarfs at the corner uphold square brackets.

On each side of the door is a guardian male figure with a cobra-snake hood. Two simply-carved windows light the interior. At either end of the baranda is a chapel.

This cave is more or less unfinished, without an image, even in the sanctuary. In some places the pillars are merely shaped, in others the carving is incomplete. On the whole, it appears that it is the carving process that has taken the greatest amount of time and labour. There exists no trace of painting in any part of the building.

CAVE 24.—If completed, cave 24 would have been the largest and one of the most beautiful biharas in the whole series of the caves at Ajanta. It is very unlike the others. We do not know the reason, but somehow the work was stopped before completion.

In the baranda there are six pillars, some of which are much damaged; but recently they have been repaired. The bracket capitals still hang from the top, although the pillars are broken away. The carved groups of flying figures, scroll and leaf ornaments are of most beautiful workmanship. The work on the doors and windows also is very elaborate. These ornaments remind one of those in cave 19, and so the date is apparently no later than that.

Inside the hall only one column has been finished; nor is any part of the interior completely executed. Because of the very unfinished state of the interior, we are able to learn exactly how these caves were excavated. Long alleys were cut out in the rock with pickaxes and then the intervening walls were broken down, except where required for supporting columns. There is no trace of painting left anywhere.

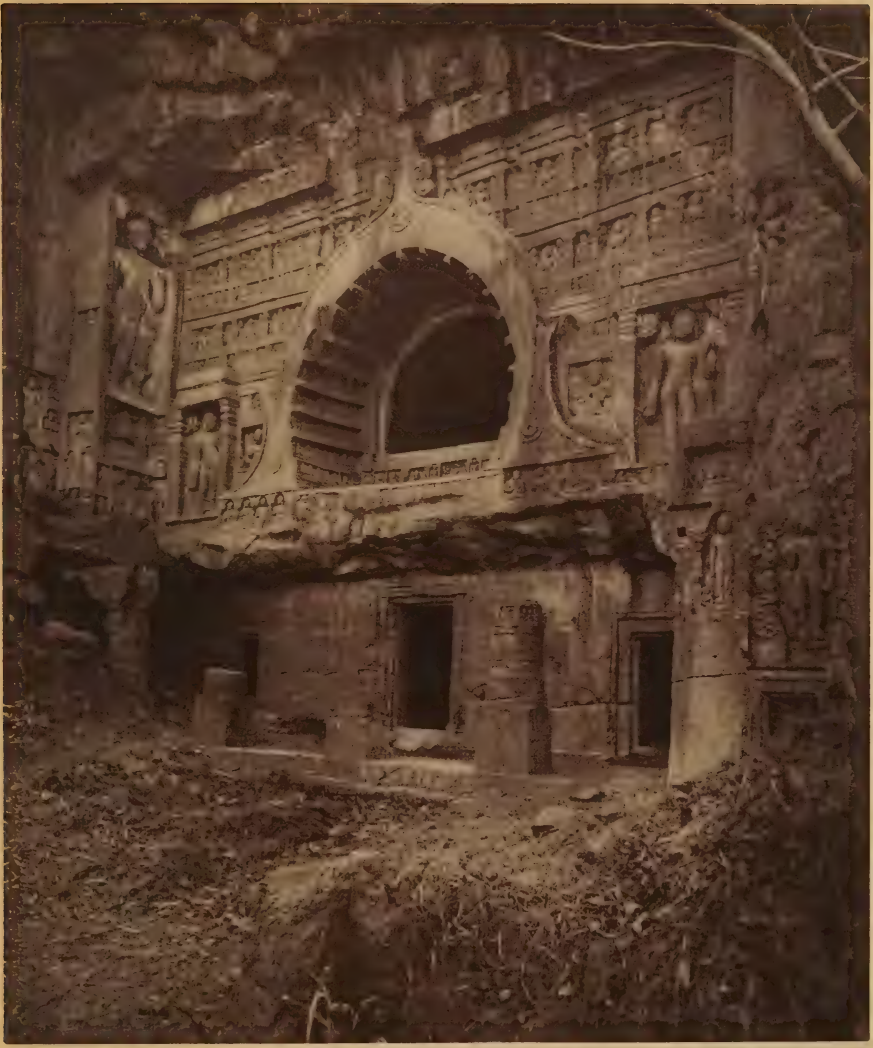
Cave 25.—To the right of the great chaitya temple, Number 6 of the last group of caves at Ajanta and a little higher up, is a small bihara temple now known as 25.

The baranda opens into an enclosed court in front, from which a door leads into the next cave, 26. The baranda has a chamber with three cells at the left end.

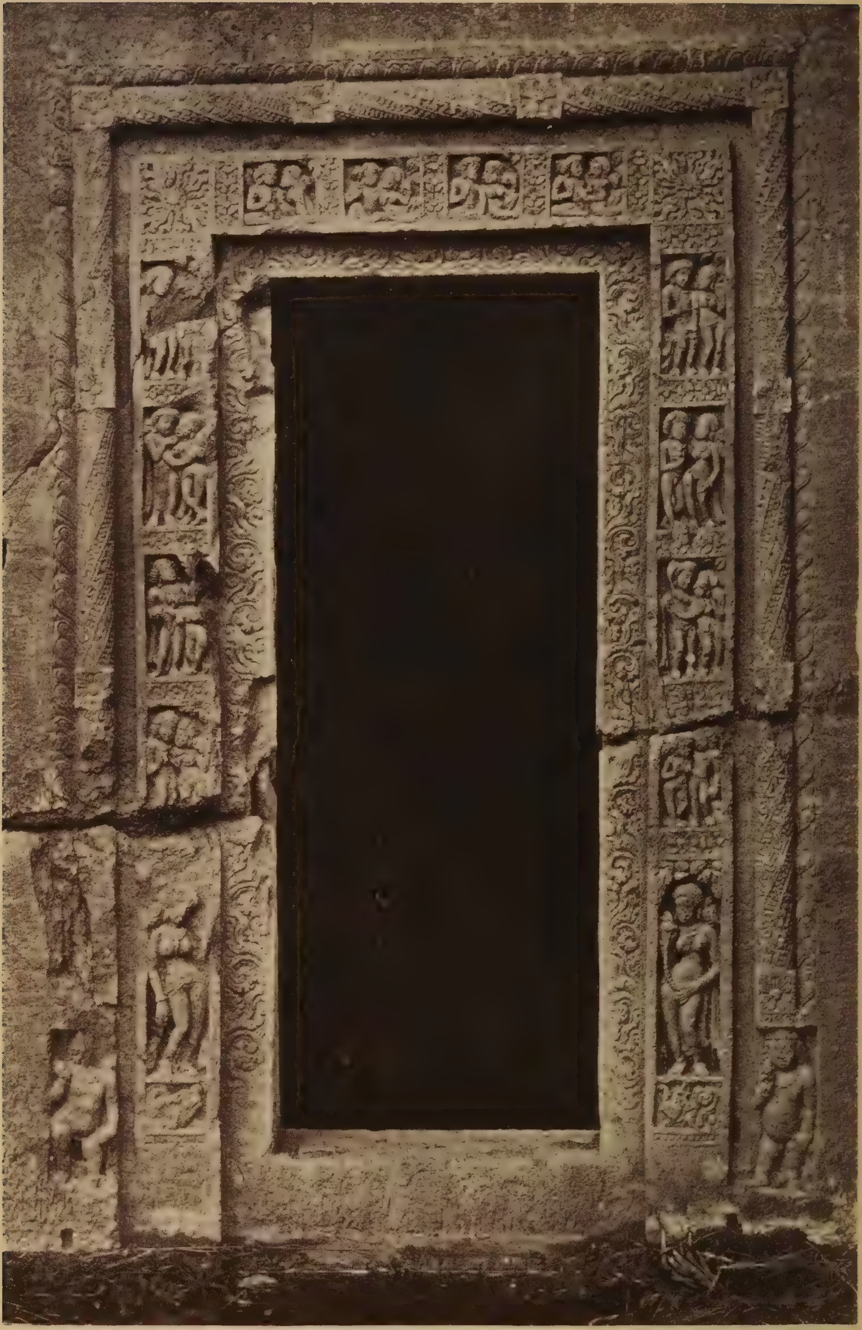
One can enter the hall by three doors. It is twenty-six feet square, and has neither cell nor sanctuary.

No paintings are found here.

Cave 26.—The fourth mighty chaitya temple, which is the last finished shrine, was excavated, it seems, for the worship of Buddhist monks who lived in the biharas at the eastern end of the hill. It nobly terminates the western hill, and



FAÇADE OF CAVE 26.



DOOR INTO THE RIGHT AISLE OF CAVE 26.

is faced and lit by the rising sun, and must have been used therefore especially for morning prayers.

Probably the great Chinese pilgrim, Heuen Tsang, visited it in the year 640 A.D.

The lower part of the façade is broken away by the fall of rocks above or possibly through an earthquake. But, round the arched-window it is still perfect, covered chiefly with figures of Buddha. Over the porch there was once a music gallery which must have extended the whole way across, although this is most unusual in the temples at Ajanta.

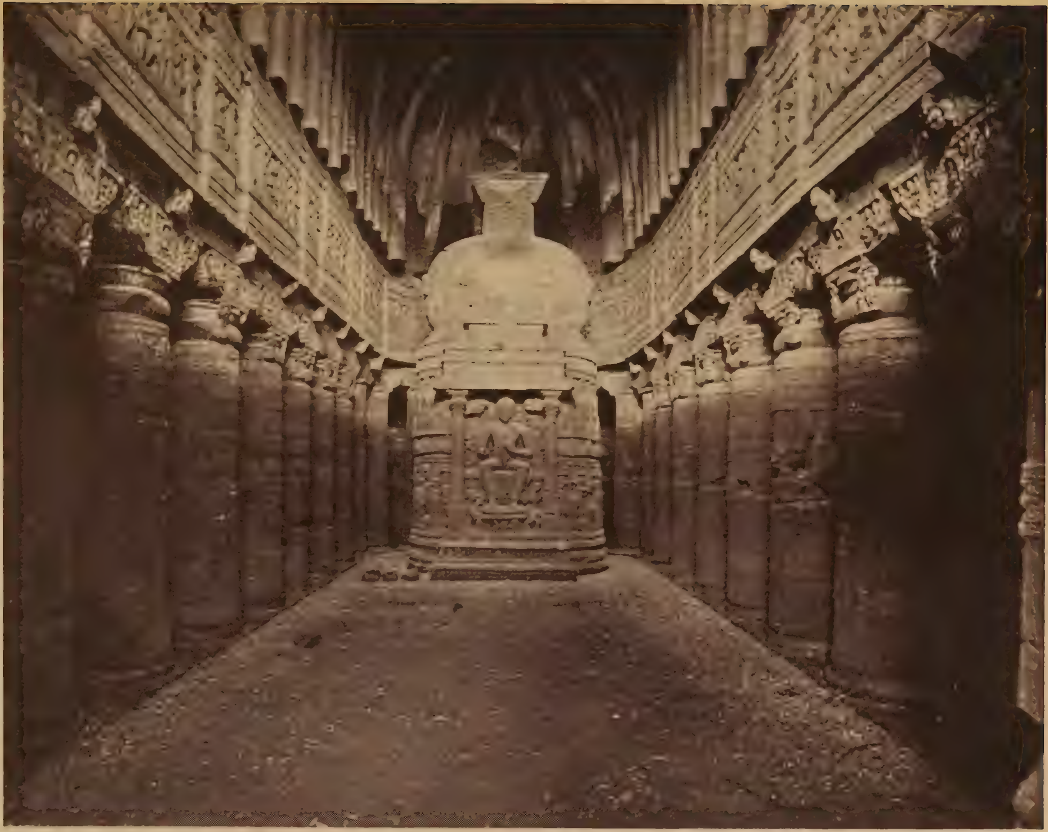
This magnificent chaitya is larger than cave 19. In length it is nearly sixty-eight feet, in breadth thirty-six feet, and in height thirty-one feet from the centre of the nave to the roof. As in other caves, the stone roof represents wooden structure. Twenty-six pillars surround the nave, and run round the stupa at the back, richly and delicately carved in the style of the columns of cave 2. Images of Buddha are placed in the exquisite shrine and along the walls where monks, students and novices stood together in prayer. In the centre of the stupa Buddha sits on a throne with lions upholding the seat, and his feet resting on a lotus flower borne by two small figures of snake kings.

The aisle walls, instead of being painted, were covered with huge sculptures, among which is a beautiful figure of the dying Buddha, more than twenty-three feet long, reminding one of the fifth century image. It seems that portraying a subject in so huge a piece of stone was no more difficult to these artists than carving upon wax. The cot on which the figure lies, the pillow at his head and the water pot by his side are just such as can be found anywhere to-day in India. Above and below the dying master are hundreds of natural-sized figures of sorrow-stricken monks grieving over the Nirvana of Buddha.

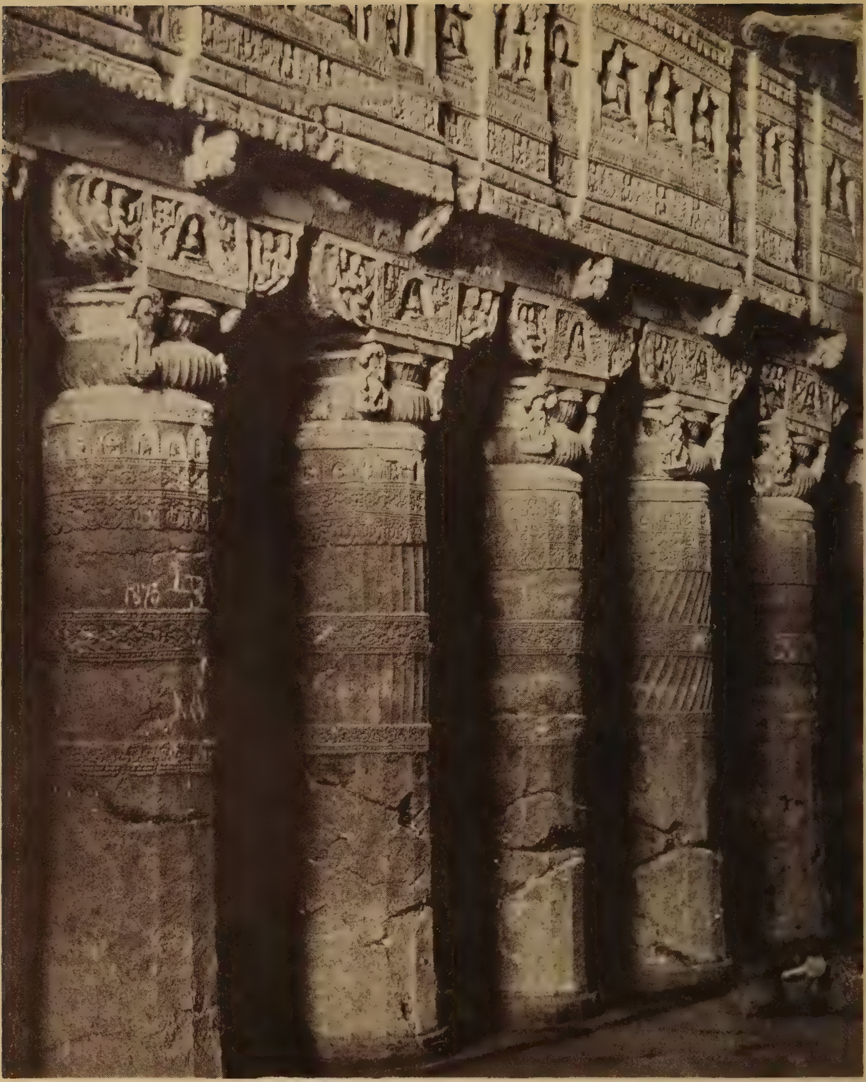
On the left side of the cave is another huge bas-relief, representing the temptation of Buddha by Mara the wicked one, such as is painted in cave 1.

Here, in this last group of caves, including Number 26, sculpture took a more prominent place than painting, for it always happens that painting appears in the world earlier than sculpture.

A very great many inscriptions are found in this temple. On the front is a string of praises of the Sugatas or Buddhists and of Bhabiraja, the minister of Asmakaraza, and of his son Debaraja, who constructed the temple. Then, over the right side door are twenty-seven lines in Sanskrit verse, and with the exception of flaws in the first



INTERIOR OF CAVE 26.



PILLARS ON THE LEFT OF CAVE 26.

and in some of the lower lines, it is fairly legible. The alphabet is similar to that used in cave 17. Some of the inscription reads like this :—

THE TEMPTATION OF BUDDHA

"This temple is established for the welfare (of people in a hill ?), tuneful with the notes of various birds, and whose caves are filled with the sounds of cow-tails (chauris) . . . . and which is inhabited by the Yogisvaras . . . . The same aggrieved Acharya having taken over the anxiety of the people regarding the Sugata . . . . "

And one on a plinth under the feet of a tall standing Buddha on the left of the façade reads :—

" The Sakya Vikshu, the Bhadanta Gunakara's meritorious gift, may, whatever merit is in this be for the attainment of supreme knowledge by all sentient beings, mother and father being first."

And again : " The smallest virtue resulting in good cannot be accomplished while engaged in worldly affairs. The result of the actions of sages who are exalted by virtue tends to the enjoyment of happiness by the people."

This chaitya-temple was one of the last executed caves at Ajanta, and elaborate work was expended upon it in order to give weight and grandeur, as in the last chord struck on a musical instrument.

Left of 26, is the last accessible bihara, Number 27. The whole front is broken away, with huge rocks on the ground and blocking the entrance, and so making a comfortable home for tigers.

It measures about forty-four feet wide and thirty-one feet long ; but has never been finished. Inside are a few cells. It has no pillars. Next to this, high up in the scarp of the rock, a fifth chaitya was begun, but never finished. It is now known as cave 28, and lies high up in the rock between caves 21 and 22.

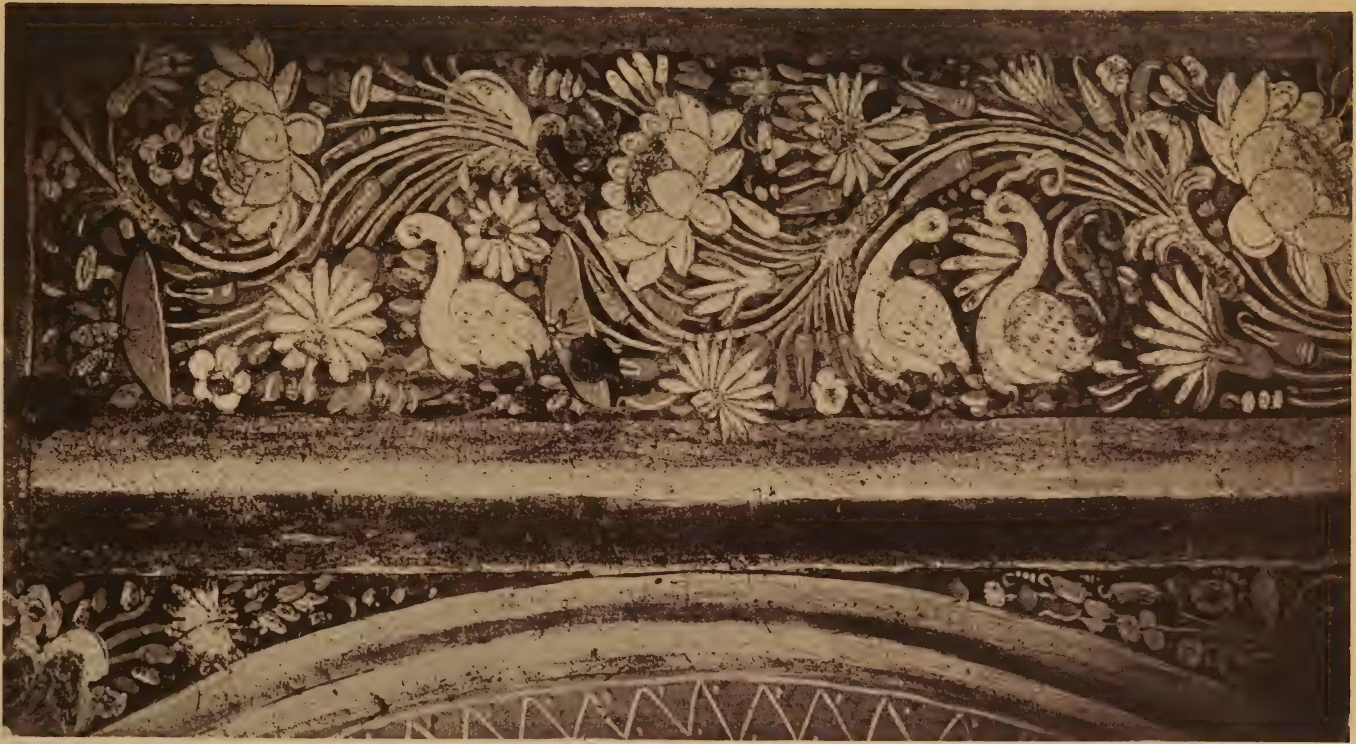
Number 29 is the last in the western hill, just as Number 1 is the last in the eastern hill. It is inaccessible; only part of the baranda of it was ever completed.

The ground for the wall painting was prepared by mixing clay, cow dung, husks and little stones together and laid on the rough surface of the rock, sometimes an inch or more thick. Over this was a white coating made of shell lime. The lime is soaked in water for twenty-two days, until it loses its stiffness and becomes a clay. It is laid on with about the consistency of an egg shell.

I had made over twelve large copies from the wall paintings, and I wished I could stay there much longer, but things were becoming less favourable every day, and I felt, even if I could stay fifty years in the caves of Ajanta, I would not be able to accomplish all that I wished to do.

It was becoming impossible to stay at Ajanta, as provisions and money had run short. Buddhu Miya was still with me, faithful unto the end, and I had found him a good companion. Singing morning praises to Allah, he would suddenly break off to shout: "Khana, khana, breakfast is ready," and then, while we ate he would listen with an appearance of interest while I talked of my work, although he did not understand its importance. And then he used to say : " Sahib, you are the sun of the hills."

When he knew the exact day in early January, 1920, on which I intended to quit the caves he informed his family, and they all, wife, sons and daughters, saw me off to Pahuŕ. I felt rather sad as I saw the bullock cart with my copies slowly preceding me ; through the gorge the mountains rose beside my track. Monkeys chattered in the trees and peacocks screamed just as they did when I arrived and always will do. Banjari women moved gracefully along the road, singing ; and I set out for the caves of Bagh.



PANEL ON CEILING OF SHRINE.

Cave I.

IN FRONT OF BAGH CAVES, BY THE RIVER BAGHMATI.

THE MAIN CAVE IN THE BAGH HILLS.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MY PILGRIMAGE TO BAGH

In all the Indian Empire there are only three places where the wonderful Buddhist wall paintings are still in existence; first the well-known caves of Ajanta in the Dekkan, about three hundred miles east of Bombay; secondly, the Bagh caves in Gwalior State, in the district of Malwa, over two hundred and fifty miles north of Ajanta; and thirdly, the caves of Sigiria and at a place called Tamankaduwā in the Island of Ceylon.

The first and last of these caves are well known, by repute at least, to the world, and Bagh, though less known, contains specimens of sculpture and painting which, although fewer, are as interesting as those at Ajanta. Enough of these ancient masterpieces are left to inspire a great Indian Academy of Art.

Recently we have heard that another group of Buddhist caves containing frescoes has been discovered by a shepherd boy, about thirty miles away from the French Pondicherry, in South India, but unfortunately we do not yet know all the details of its discovery.

Having spent many months copying the frescoes on the Ajanta walls, in the middle of January, 1920, I set out for the caves of Bagh with a knapsack on my back and a roll of paper in my hand, to make drawings, but for only a few days.

This time I went quite alone, not taking even a servant with me. From the junction of Bhusaval, where I took in a last small stock of tinned tongue and beans, the train cut through rocks and mile after mile of wooded hills and, having crossed one of the longest bridges in the world, over the great River Narmada, it brought me in the afternoon to Mhow, the nearest railway station to the caves, which are, however, over one hundred miles distant.

The small town of Mhow is on the way to Indore. It contains the British cantonment and boasts a motor bus service of one bus only, which runs once every day to a big village called Dhar, about thirty-four miles distant, returning at night. This bus is made to carry twenty people, who sit in rows facing the engine, as in a charabanc. I had reason to regret that there was no upper deck for passengers. A much greater number than the bus could carry had gathered together, squatting beside their boxes and bundles, utensils and hookahs, five or six hours before the bus was due to start. There was a fight to get on the bus, and nothing but my European suit of clothes helped me to win the seat next to the driver.

It was a glowing sunny afternoon in January. The vehicle did not travel fast like a London bus, but faster than a bullock cart or a tanga, and this pace was very delightful to us as we sat looking around idly at the dark green debadar trees, the small clay huts and the deep blue sky towards the east.

Some of the passengers inside chatted to one another all the time, but I could not understand anything they said, their tongue being absolutely strange to me, while others sat chewing little rods of sugar-cane and smoking their hookahs, lost in thought.

The bus stopped about eleven miles from Mhow, near a clean-looking white dak bungalow and the villagers rushed out to see this novel conveyance. We got down, and as we lingered maidens in gay dress with red, blue, green and yellow skirts, drew their evening water in pitchers from the well and poured some of it, cold and clear, into the screwed-up palms of our hands. Then the front of the bus was opened and buckets of water splashed into the radiator, which had grown too hot. Men, women and children watched with eager and friendly curiosity.

Refreshed, we climbed into our seats and proceeded on the journey, with eyes directed towards the setting sun, which in colour was a blend of red and rich gold, like the deep-hued yolk of a brown egg.

All that glorious and mysterious evening the bus carried me farther and farther into the unknown land. Movement, colour and sound were exquisitely mingled. To the west lay the faint blue Bindhya ranges, outlined against a soft gold sky. Dust ascended slowly into the still air as the cattle passed with a tinkling of bells and the notes of a reed-pipe which the herd-boy played as he sat huddled on the ox's back. One heard also the sudden scampering of the animals to the roadside. The birds clamoured for the cosiest position on the branch for the night's rest. Temple bells rang out in the distance and women blew on their conch-shells to announce the approach of night. Everything fell quiet and sombre as the deep blue night stole on.

Now appeared clusters of houses with a red-flamed light here and there at windows and doors, and a passenger or two left the bus as he reached the neighbourhood of his dwelling. The sky above grew heavy with stars ; down below the trees full of glow-worms exhibited their rounded forms along the roadside in lovely illumination.

A peculiar burning smell roused me to look across the fields, and I saw flames jumping up and down at irregular distances, and every time they sprang up they revealed to us in yet a fresh spot a group of villagers taking their ease around a smouldering heap of rubbish, the ashes from which would fertilise the field. At about eight or nine o'clock, away on the right, I saw the brick palace of the Raja of Dhar. Gorgeous guards with guns and spears were pacing around its walls and gates.

We drove through the quiet streets shaded by huge grandfatherly banyan and ashath trees with knotted trunks and luxuriant foliage, where birds, monkeys and tiny creatures love to sleep and play. Then a few people began to pass us on the road, and, at length, we reached the dak bungalow at Dhar, white-washed as all Indian dak bungalows are.

I descended, and entering a room, called for a servant and asked for a hot bath and a good meal. But, it seemed to me presently, as I began to prepare for a bath, that Bengali babus were everywhere, for I now heard a discussion about me in Bengali language. A little later I came upon three or four young gentlemen vigorously feasting on chicken curry and chops, which they, being Hindus, would not be allowed at home. Their presence mystified me until I learnt that as Bengalis are in the habit of working for other people, they were doing such things as teaching the Dhar Raja's daughters, managing his estates and looking after the Post Office Department. They were interested to hear of my journey to Bagh, and one of them grew intensely excited and wanted to come with me, because near to Bagh is a great lake in which for a long time he had cherished the ambition to fish. So now he would get a chance to catch fine fish while I worked in the caves. But in the end he was afraid to come, and all the babus tried to dissuade me also from the dangerous and uncertain expedition.

I did not know, but as soon as the bus arrived at Dhar the mail tanga left, which goes towards Bagh, and to have gone cheaply and in company I should have had to have waited till the next night for the mail-tanga. But I was anxious to be off that same night, so it was necessary for me to procure a tanga ; a jatra tamasha, however, was taking place in the village. " Tamasha " means " great fun," and " jatra," open-air music, singing, dancing, drinking and smoking. To this entertainment all the men of the town had gone, and from it nothing could draw them away. But fortunately the Bengali gentleman, who was the Dhar Raja's Naeb-bahadur or manager, told me of some men who would go with me to find some conveyance, and particularly one tanga man who was well known as the last resource in emergency.

We knocked at a little mud hut till a woman woke up from her sleep, and jangling her bangles came to the door and told us that her husband was elsewhere, and when we got there we found he had gone; however, we tracked him to the jatra performance where he sat quietly smoking and listening in the middle of a great torch-lit crowd.

Many people here do not know about Bagh, but they have heard of a small town, Kukshi, farther on; so this man, when we mentioned the name of the Naeb-bahadur, arranged to take me about thirty miles to a village along the road to Kukshi for twenty rupees or so.

Within an hour he came to the bungalow and I got into the tanga, softened at the bottom with a pile of straw and dry hay, which the driver took for the horses. We started off on the long road between big trees to Bagh. After passing the village of Dhar the land lay bare, except for a few small villages here and there, and stretched away indefinitely beneath the immense crowded sky, that throbbed with its load of orderly stars. Such country and space enriches the mind and broadens the soul. There was no sound nor movement, nothing save a jackal's occasional howl and the swift cautious run of a fat-tailed fox across the road. My tanga man told me that a jackal or fox passing on the left side of a man while journeying brought him good luck. This superstition encouraged me, and wrapping the blanket closer round me, for the cold was of the kind that penetrates to one's bones, I fell asleep fearlessly.

Suddenly I woke up in the middle of a river to find the horses sturdily dragging us across while the tanga bumped upon the rocky river-bed. After this I dozed until there came a shout of "Hai, hai, hai! What are you doing? Where are you going?" and my man shouted back: "Hai, what's the matter with you? We're going to Bagh, Bagh, Kukshi."

"You can't go there now, it's too late; you must wait till morning." I guessed what they were saying, so I grumbled and shouted. Then two men looked into the tanga and I immediately flashed out a torch-light on their faces, which dazzled them, but when they saw my topi and thick overcoat, they seemed astonished and frightened, and slunk back into a thatched hut at the wayside. They may have been simply chowkidars or customs' men, but I rather thought they had seen the mail-tanga pass and were minded to rob some stray traveller at that hour of night. So we quickly whipped up the horses and I shouted "jaldi chalo, jaldi chalo," [go quickly] and escaped from that danger.

At dawn the tanga-man, the two horses and I were still trying to cast aside our sleepy weariness, when we came upon a large river-side village, which roused us into morning's natural activity. The people were washing right down at the water's edge and taking their time over the scrupulous cleaning of their faces, and some were bathing. A few men sitting solitary on a boulder a little way out in the river were steadily brushing their teeth with bits of twig which they broke off nim trees overhanging the banks, for the bitter nim juice is good for teeth. Women, wading up to their knees, and carefully drawing up their skirts, dispersed the floating dirt and then dipped in their pitchers. In the village were a number of small shops and there the people who had travelled by the tanga which accompannied the mail were sitting idly, because their tanga-man had died that night and they could go no farther until the next day. But I wanted to get to Bagh and so, after much enquiry, found a Mahomedan so strong and big as quite to frighten me, who was willing to drive me if I paid him well.

Under the trees, as we went, were vermillion painted stone gods and goddesses, put there by the Hindu people of this part. They made the Mahomedan very angry and, thinking me a

Christian, he cursed the Hindus all the way. He drove me swiftly to a village ten miles off, changed horses with a Hindu, and calling him "great badmash" drove me on again.

Now the land became mountainous and wooded, the haunts of Koles and Bhils, a wild and fierce tribe, the aborigines. I had glimpses of rough tree-branch huts and often caught sigh of low carts with small, solid wheels, drawn by one bullock and laden with wood. Once I was astonished to see how the golden-coloured man and woman walking beside a cart resembled the figures I had seen in the Ajanta frescoes of the earlier period; the woman had a sharp nose and long, fine arched eyebrows over lovely dark eyes, and the man's curly hair was encircled by a band of palm-tree leaves and flowers.

The road went winding up and up, and then fell steeply; rise followed on fall indefinitely. At length, as cautiously we came down a slope and reached level ground, the tanga jerked and the horses began to go backwards, for there across the road, with the appearance as I thought at first of a crack in the parched ground, was a great brown, double-faced snake, which had stopped to listen in the middle of its tacking across the road. I wanted to kill it; but the Mussulman driver would not let me; he clapped his hands, and shouted until the snake glided slowly out of the way to the jungle.

Down in the valley to which we now came ran a river, overhung by trees whose boughs met together. We got down and let loose the horses to drink, the tanga-driver ate his fried rice and corn, and I opened for myself a tin of tongue to eat with my last piece of loaf. After this short halt we went on again, and presently came up with a man walking with a little baggage and with a gun in his hand. I grew interested at seeing a gun, and when I heard he wanted to reach Kukshi I invited him into the tanga. It was nice to have a companion, especially one who told stories. He said he always carried a gun to make Bhils afraid of throwing arrows. He told me that a few years ago one Bhil was so outrageous in his daring that the Government offered a large sum of money to whoever would capture him, dead or alive. The reward tempted no one, but at length, quite by chance, an officer caught him by the hand, and as he was wrenching himself free cut off his hand, which he brought to the governors, and received the reward, but never got the Bhil.

The Bhils, he told me, are extremely dexterous with their bows, for, seeing a traveller coming along the road, they will let fly an arrow and cut off a nose or ear without the man realising from whence the arrow comes. He, terrified, naturally enough, at this assault from an unseen enemy, is anxious only to fly, and drops all the baggage he may be carrying.

My companion entertained me with many such stories all the way to the next village, which we reached in the afternoon.

In this village—the name of which I forget, but I think it was Sardapur—the very poor peasants live in a row of ten or twelve mud houses, together with their pigs, calves, goats and donkeys. Some of the huts were also used as shops for selling food, pottery and lacquer bangles. There was also a smithy with two tanga-horses waiting to be shod, and a tanner who sold skins for drums, bellows and water-bags. Looking at this village, one could imagine just how it must have been thousands of years ago.

I had the good fortune to find the mail-tanga kept back by its horses wanting new shoes. Two passengers were already seated ; I made the third, and we travelled on to Bagh.

The afternoon soon passed, the sun was setting and the jagged scenery giving way to gentle green and damp forest land, when the tanga-man first began to mutter : "Bagh is not very far now, not very far," and at last we arrived in the village surrounded by a thick forest. Bagh is about eight hundred and fifty feet above sea level, situated in a pleasant valley extending north and south three miles by an average breadth of one mile, and at the foot of a low range of hills of the southern slope of the Bindha ranges, about a hundred feet high, which form the western boundary. So fertile is it with banyan trees, papaya, mango, bamboo, sal and banana, that I was reminded of a Bengal village, and it was as startling to me to find this green valley plumped down in the middle of such arid country as it is to a traveller in the desert to come upon an oasis.

At length we drove up to a brick and stone slab lime-white washed, which stood up among rows of bamboo bushes. It was distinguished by the symbolical sign of the Hindu Gwalior State, two fine black cobras enclosing a crude outline drawing of sun with eyes, nose and mouth painted upon it, and below—

BAGH INSPECTION BUNGALOW

was written in English, Hindustani and Mussulmani (Urdu) languages. Perhaps I can best convey its appearance by saying that it resembled most closely a typical English war memorial tablet.

So, after a long non-stop journey from Mhow, through the town of Dhar and over the Tanda Ghats, having spent the night in a tanga, crossing fields, forests and a great mountainous tract, not without perils from tigers, snakes and footpads, I had finally arrived at Bagh Inspection Bungalow.

I entered and ordered a meal and a bath, and while the Mussulman cook and his wife were cooking the one and heating the other, and although night was already coming on, I took the bungalow gardener and started off in the direction of the caves, so excited was I to catch just a glimpse of them before going to bed in peace.

We hastened along the road to the caves ; two or three times I was carried on the broad back of my servant across the Baghmati river. But we did not get as far as the cave, for night was upon us, and my gardener-guide pointed out a low range of hills and said : " There are the Panch Pandu ; but, Sab, we must return, for snakes and tigers are already out." The caves are known to people in general as the Bagh caves on account of the closeness to the village Bagh, but locally they are called Panch Pandu.

When I had returned to the bungalow I ate lentils and chapati and went early to bed, thinking how glad I was to have at last reached Bagh ;

and how different the people of the Narmada Valley through which I had passed, including Bagh itself, where food, servants and friendliness could be found, at least to a certain extent, were from those of Ajanta, in the terrible Dekkan land near the Tapti Valley, who would do nothing at all for a traveller, not even give him food.

The next morning I woke up early and wanted to get hold of some men to go with me at once to the caves; but the chowkidar told me that the coolies who are usually willing to do any work offered do not come out of their houses and look for work until rather later on in the morning, and so, to pass away the time, I had a general look round. The garden of this bungalow was full of karabi flowers, and gandha-raj, bela, jasmin, which are the flowers that so profusely bloom in Bengal, as well as fruits, mangoes, bales, papayas, atas and rich pomegranates.

On the right of the main road, on the top of the hill, was a ruined red stone and brick fort, which was built by a Hindu king many years ago to safeguard the village from invaders rushing in from the north or west. The ascent to it is by a small, very steep footpath. The whole village now contains from about four to five hundred houses, within the compass of a low mud and stone wall which runs round the northern and part of the western edges of this hill; but it is said that in the olden days Bagh possessed between two and three thousand houses. Lying, as it does, on the great broad ancient road which runs down from the north and passes southwards through Ajanta on to the Dekkan and thence downwards, it was once, no doubt, of great importance, especially between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D., when Buddhism in this part of India was at the height of its glory. Several local scholars of this faith: Dharma-Rakhya, Guna-Vadra, Paramartha, and Atigupta, of Ujjain between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. all visited China to exchange ideas and preach and study the Buddhist law, while the great Buddhist Chinese scholars and pilgrims, Heuen Tsang, Fa-heen and Hsuan Tai came to visit Central and Western India about the same time.

In the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, however, Hun kings swarmed across Asia into Western India, fighting and destroying wherever they went. Mussulman invasions were also continual; so that by the tenth century Buddhism was driven out and utterly crushed and, consequently, the Bagh caves became deserted. Hindu Brahminism now spread over the land, and since that date the people of Bagh and the villages around have nearly all been Hindus.

About five hundred years ago the ambition of chiefs of the villages around Bagh to be lords of the land resulted in a quarter of a century of anarchy, in which Bagh was devastated and desolated. Then it arose once more to some importance through becoming more than two hundred years ago the occasional residence of Jhasu Bomeah, a celebrated freebooter, who possessed himself of the Kotra district, and who built as places of security for his followers and plunder the forts of Soosaree, Bagh and Kukshi.

Jhasu Bomeah became by his bold depredations, which extended not only into Malwa but even to the Dekkan and Guzrat, so formidable as to excite the serious attention of the Maratta princes. He was besieged by a large army during forty days in the fort of Kukshi, at the end of which period, finding the place no longer tenable, he made his escape to Bagh. To this last place he was pursued and again besieged; but, not being able to make a stand, he retired to the mountains, from which period nothing further of him is known. His country was divided among the conquerors, Bagh with its dependent villages falling to the share of the Maharaja of Sindhia in the eighteenth century, who used to manage it by deputy, and later it became included in the Gwalior State, to which it still belongs.

These caves became known to the officials some hundred years ago as an especial abode of tigers, but to-day, strange to say, Bagh, which means "tiger," is more famed to the natives for its pottery and lacquer bangles than for the fact that it is close to the great Buddhist temples.

By about nine o'clock the same morning I had collected two men from the village and we started for the caves. Between the village and the caves —a distance of about four miles—is an open jungle with level fields of dwarf cypress and date bushes, and babla looking like mimosa, but full of thorns. Nim and jambu trees grow here and there along the banks of the boulder-strewn Baghmati river. The river wriggles snake-like through the fields, and we had to cross it three or four times on our way to the caves. A few villages were dotted about, consisting sometimes of only three or four huts, which are inhabited by the Koles, Bhils and other hairy, half-clothed itinerant tribes who live by shooting game with their primitive bows and arrows and by cutting wood, which they sell in the market.

Before the advent of the Rajputs, the Bhils were the ruling race in Western India; but about three or four hundred years ago they became a despised, outcast, fierce people, who wandered apart from the rest of mankind.

To-day they are more peaceable and show less suspicion of civilisation, but they are still like delightful children who do not want to work, but prefer rather to adorn their arms and legs with bangles and dance with their whole might to the drum and the cymbal.

My brother artist, Suren Kar, told me the story of the following incident that occurred while he, among other artists, was staying at Bagh. At the approach of the spring festival, the head man of the village gave a free-drink dancing party to the villagers. They became wildly excited and danced round the fire far into the moonlit night, waving their spears and swords in the dark night sky, and playing drums all the time. Suddenly there was a cry and much shouting, saying : "Hai, Hai ! Patle Baba's head lies on the ground, Patle Baba's head lies on the ground." These people were so wild as not to mind chopping off the head of a neighbour when inflamed by the dance.

To save themselves from starvation, however, these Bhils will sometimes condescend to doing a little work, and that must have been why I was able to coax four men who, with the other two, marched single file across the fields, carrying my ladders, water jug, oil lamp, drinking water and drawing materials.

We presently saw far away before us a deep hole in the hillside through the dark green trees in front, and my companion said: "That is Gonsaiji's Gumpha," which means the holy father's cave house. Then we came right up to the foot of the hill, and there, exactly in front of the caves, was running the same little Baghmati river in which the pilgrims used to wash their hands and feet before visiting the sacred monasteries. Cypress bushes had grown thick here, and many kinds of trees, thick-leaved and shadowy, were stretching their roots luxuriously in the clear, cool, lovely water.

No water-tank is found in the rock at Bagh as at Ajanta and the other excavated caves of India, and this at first seems a little strange; but since this river, just below the caves, flows for about nine months of the year, evidently it served as a water-supply for the monks who, for the remaining three months, could get almost perfectly-filtered water by digging in the sandy banks.

Immediately after crossing this river we came to a level plain, and then we climbed a flight of seventy rudely-formed stone steps which led to the sombre mouth of the caves, which we had seen from far away in the field. As I approached I saw a wonderful sight: flocks of wild doves, green parrots and hundreds of monkeys and squirrels were collected round a slender nude figure, with long unkempt hair and body rough and grey with ash-dust, sitting cross-legged and immobile, a yogi, or holy man, known as Gonsai Babaji. His disciple had left his food of milk, sweetmeats and fruits in front of him, and the birds and monkeys were eating it, but as soon as they saw me the monkeys each picked up two crammed handfuls of the food, and swung themselves into the great nim trees and jumped from top to top, chattering, howling and whooping, and the birds reluctantly flew away.

The poor simple villagers gave this holy father sweetmeats and money because they looked upon him as the great protector of the villagers of Bagh. He remained day and night outside the entrance, but his predecessors had penetrated inside this cave and had ruined the paintings by smoke and fire.

The hill in which the caves have been excavated runs parallel to the little river Baghmati. The lower half is sloping, but steep ; the upper, perpendicular, composed entirely of horizontal strata of sandstone and claystone alternating with each other ; it is a peculiar rock, quite distinct from the volcanic rocks in the neighbourhood and was used for smelting iron until foreign competition killed the industry. The sandstone contains a large amount of clay, and is coloured with oxide of iron, varying from deep red to perfect white. With its colour vary also its hardness and the fineness of its grain, the dark red being fine-grained and tolerably hard, the white coarse-grained and so soft as to be able to be rubbed to pieces between the fingers, and containing many organic impressions. Different shades of the red sandstone occupy the upper or perpendicular part of the hill with thin layers of the claystone interposed.

The caves occupy the centre of the hill, commencing at its perpendicular part. It is through the lower half of the caves, for about six feet from their floor, that the stratum of white sandstone runs; this, however, reposes on the old red sandstone. The upper part of the caves is mostly formed of the light red sandstone.

Superimposed on this sandstone is a deep stratum of white clay or claystone, in places fully twenty feet in depth, and it is evidently owing to the absorbent and retentive power of this clay and the weight as well as the destructive effect of the water in it, that such immense flaky masses of the roofs and barandas have been loosened and fallen. This does not seem to have acted on all the caves alike, both on account of the unequal depth of the clay and the texture of the underlying stone, which seems to be most compact in the first cave, hence its preservation, but, while the most southerly has suffered most, the damage and injury the caves have sustained is to be attributed to variations in the strata of stone and clay.

The hill runs north-east and south-west, and the caves face north-west, so that never at any time do they receive the sunlight full on them, but in the evening they are lit quite considerably by the rays of the setting sun. This is the case with almost all Indian cave excavations.

The caves are fully exposed, unfortunately, to weather of all kinds, as in many caves the barandas have broken away altogether; the jungle has grown thickly in front, and boulders and debris have collected to a considerable height; while, from very ancient times the caves have been frequented by tigers, hyenas, jackals, snakes, monkeys, wild boars, cobra and pythons, which abound and wander freely in and out of the caves, and therefore the villagers in the neighbourhood are terrified to visit them; but in spite of all these perils, just as at Ajanta, a fair is held once a year in the winter, down by the river Baghmati.

There are about nine caves in all, each one a bihara, for, curiously, there are no chaityas in this series. The excavation of these temples took place in about the fifth century A.D. Many of them are now fallen in altogether and are in a ruined condition.

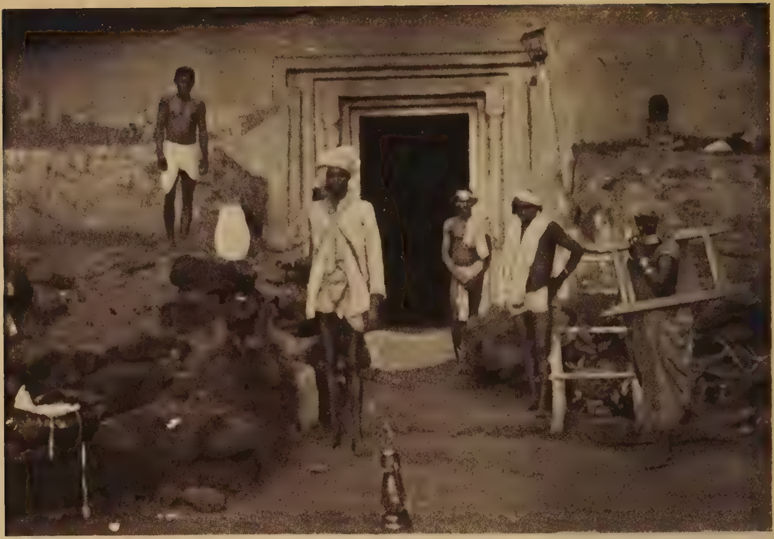
These caves were not all excavated at one time, but no doubt they were all done between the fourth and sixth centuries. About one thousand feet to the left of the steps leading to cave 2 is a small bihara cave, most likely excavated after all the others in the series; but as it is at one end, we shall call it Number 1.

In front is a little baranda, the pillars of which have fallen away. There is a single entrance and no windows. The portico which once stood in front of the door is now utterly destroyed. The interior is an absolutely plain room, twenty-three feet wide, having no cells, sanctuary, statue or painting, and it was therefore most probably a dwelling house for the head priest of its neighbour, cave 2. The four pillars are much worn away and the roof they support might at any moment collapse.

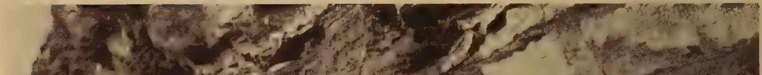
On the way to the second cave on the right are signs of excavation in the face of the rock; but they are so blocked up with debris that it is very difficult to know whether they denote the actual remains of a cave or only the commencement.

PEASANT WOMEN CARRYING MEALS TO THEIR MEN IN THE FIELDS.

THE JUNGLE VILLAGE NEAR BAGH, WHERE I SLEPT.



ENTRANCE TO CAVE 2, BAGH.



CAVE 5, BAGH.

Showing how the whole of Baranda has fallen in front of the Entrance.

Then we come to cave 2, excavated about the fifth century A.D., which is usually the first entered, being led up to by the flight of ancient steps. This is the "Gonshai Gumpha" which can be seen from afar off in the fields as a dark hole in the red sandstone hill piercing the thick trees.

Outside the cave is a small landing place overhung by the hill, which is here at its greatest height of one hundred and fifty feet. Evidently this once formed a baranda supported by columns, but now it is an utter ruin, heaped into great mounds nearly as high as the cave, leaving a pathway up to the door, and planed and plastered with cow-dung, so as to form a high seat for the Sadhu. The plastered front of the cave and fragments among the ruin give evidence that the baranda was once decorated. A portico originally protected the entrance; but that too has fallen in, scarcely a trace remaining.

At each end of the baranda is a small recess; that on the right contains a very modern figure of Ganesh, the Hindu God of Luck, usurping the place of the earliest figure of Buddha, which is shown to have been there originally by the Buddhistical emblems of flying figures holding garlands, such as are often found on the walls at Ajanta.

On entering, one is startled to see lighting the approach, an old city street lamp stuck up on a wobbley post. Behind, on the wall, the Sadhu has scratched in vermilion the marks of large trisulas, the signs of a Siba worshipper.

Inside the cave you are impressed with gloomy grandeur; it is not, however, till you have been a few seconds in it that you perceive its great extent. The open area of this cave is a regular square, measuring eighty-four feet each side. Its height is fourteen feet and a half. The roof is supported by four ranges of massive columns; the two centre ones being round; those at the right and left are square at the base, but at the heights of five and eight feet formed into hexagons and dodecagons.

The paintings on the walls and ceilings of the cave have been terribly injured by the smoke and soot from the fires of the holy fathers, who have lived there for centuries. But, in spite of this, were an artist to take sufficient trouble, he would be sure to discover some wonderful paintings unknown to the world, for many traces are still to be found on the dark walls and ceilings. Those on the roof, are chiefly beautiful decorative diagonal designs in square compartments of about one foot, containing elephants, buffaloes, birds, fruit and flowers. The grotesque dwarf figures, male and female, of tribute bearers, resemble the sculptured figures in old English churches, especially I noticed those in Wells Cathedral, in Somersetshire.

Passing between the centre range of columns to the end of the cave, you enter an oblong recess or baranda, measuring twenty feet by twelve, open in front towards the cave and supported by two hexagonal columns. In niches, on the remaining three sides of this apartment, figures are carved in bold relief—Buddha and his disciples.

From this recess, you pass at the back through a small doorway and enter an inner apartment measuring twenty feet by seventeen, in the centre of which, cut out of the solid rock, is what the natives term "The Churn," or stupa, being a regular hexagon of three feet three inches each side, surmounted by a plain dome reaching nearly to the roof, to which it is joined by a small square ornament.

Around the large cave are twenty small cells which local guides call the "dokans," or shops, each measuring nine feet in depth, with a separate entrance towards the cave. There are seven of these to the right, six to the left, and four at the end of the cave, two on each side of the recess.

Entering the second to the left of these small apartments, you perceive at about four feet from the ground in the opposite wall a small oblong excavation of about three feet by two; creeping through which, you enter a small apartment of about twelve feet square, in the opposite wall of which is a similar excavation leading to a like apartment; and so on successively for five small rooms, gradually ascending the hill, the floor of each inner apartment being on a level with the lower part of the entrance from the outer one.

These secret apartments appear originally either to have led or to have been intended to lead to the top of the hill; and to have been the private entrance. At present, however, they receive neither light nor air, excepting from the first entrance.

This cave is especially interesting as combining both the bihara and chaitya; for here, beside the cells, is found the object of worship, the stupa.

Leaving the second cave and proceeding southward twenty or thirty paces, by a narrow ledge round a projecting part of the hill, one reaches a third cave. Between these two caves chisel marks are visible on the wall, as though excavations had been begun only and not fully carried out. In front of this third cave is a large nim tree, whose spreading branches screen the entrance.

The cave is apparently an appendage to the preceding bihara, and by reason of the high finish that has been given to the ceilings of the cells and frontage of the cave, it is most probable that it was excavated for the accommodation of some particular or higher class of the priesthood.

The front of the cave has not had a baranda; but the façade, the lower part of which has broken away, is smoothly chiselled, not plastered, and carved with tigers' heads between the usual stupa emblems of Buddhist caves.

The cave itself is sixty feet by forty, and fifteen feet high; it is quite plain in design, and has been roughly plastered for painting. One first enters a hall twenty-eight feet square with six supporting octagonal pillars. Four cells lead from the right side. On the left, two pillars form the entrance to a baranda decorated with mosaic patterns, and, from this, an intricate arrangement of cells with passages between them, leads out, causing one side of the cave to extend laterally beyond the proper front or entrance. The ceilings of the passages have all been decorated with paintings shaded in black and white, and in a large cell are some beautifully-drawn figures.

At the end of the cave opposite to the main entrance three doors lead to a hall about thirty-nine feet square with two rows of four broad, square, rough pillars, stretching across. The angles of the corners in this cave are not well cut, but were evidently left unfinished.

The total length of the cave from front to back is about one hundred and thirty feet and the general height about sixteen feet.

Leaving this third cave, and returning by the same road, you descend the stone stairs and proceed along the bottom of the hill southward, for about a hundred yards and then reascend by a rugged steep footpath to the fourth cave. Steps originally led from the stream to the cave.

It is the largest cave of the series, about ninety-four feet square, and is remarkable in many respects; it is better lit, the pillars are more elegantly proportioned and the paintings are superior, more elaborate and more diversified. It is called "Rangmahal," which means "colour hall."

Connected with this cave, in one unbroken front, which originally was covered with paintings uninterruptedly, is the patha-sholla, or schoolroom. A splendid colonnade, two hundred and twenty feet in extreme length and connected by twenty octagonal pillars fourteen feet in height, embraces the façades of both caves. Such magnificence is unrivalled and unequalled in any known bihara; a pilaster at each end and one pillar at the south are all that remain.

The first object noticed on approaching the cave is a colossal figure of Buddha, which can be seen through the trees, cut in relief on the face of the rock a few yards to the left of the baranda; it is in an arched niche about thirteen feet high. He is represented in the teaching attitude, seated with the left elbow on the right knee, the foot resting on the ground. The left arm has an ornament on it. The right side is worn away. An open makava's mouth is behind the head and a riband lies on the shoulder; above the head of the figure are the remains of a dagoba with a triple umbrella and the usual flying garland bearers at the side of it.

A few yards farther on, just round the corner, is a little recess containing two figures seated close together on a bench, the cobra's hood over the right one. It is impossible to tell who they represent, but they may be Buddhas. The walls are painted with eight rows of seated Buddhas; over these, within an archway, are the remains of another seated figure of Buddha, having the chakra, or praying wheel, beneath him between two antelopes' heads, and flying garland bearers above. This recess borders on the pilaster which is connected with the colonnade of the baranda. It is more handsome and rich than that at the opposite end, where a pilaster and one pillar remain standing. The baranda is fourteen feet wide throughout its length, and ten feet high. From the portions of it which have not fallen in, the roof appears to have been painted with flowers and intricate patterns. The back wall has been plastered and painted continuously through its whole length in double rows, one above the other; portions of the upper only remain, and even these are scribbled over with names and foolish inscriptions.

The cave itself has three entrances and two windows nearly as big as the doors. The chief door is exceedingly handsome and well-finished, the other two are also beautiful. It is fifteen feet high and eight feet broad, gradually receding into nine feet by six. The cornice of the door is ornamented with a row of nine Buddhist figures in different positions and a miniature dagoba at each end. The frieze has nine heads of Buddha and the architrave a flowered scroll, which passes down the inner pilasters. The consoles bear a female figure with one hand on a child's head, both standing within the open mouth of a river-dragon.

The other doors have much the same ornamentation. The windows are nearly square and have on the inside holes for the sockets of wooden shutters and also for a bar to fasten and shut them. The cave, despite its three doors and two windows, is quite dark and it is almost impossible to make one's way into it without a light. Bats, snakes and panthers inhabit it undisturbed.

The hall possesses a most unusual arrangement of columns, which was most likely a necessary construction required by the weakness of the roof. Twenty-eight pillars, twelve feet high, support the roof and form the aisles. They are square at the base and change to octagons and then polygons as they rise, returning to octagons at the summit. Those at the rear are plain octagons which were once painted on their inner faces with figures of Buddha; but these figures have now almost vanished.

Within this circle of pillars are eight cylindrical columns arranged in pairs. They are carved and once bore a frieze decorated with figures and heads of Buddha carved in the stone. In the extreme centre are four-based pillars about twenty-two feet high. It is evident they were inserted after the cave was excavated, for they are built up out of sandstone blocks. Debris has piled up around them, due to the collapse of the roof.

The sandstone has been too soft and unfitted for sculpture, so that, except for a very little carving on the front pillars, its place has been supplied by the kindred art, painting. The whole cave is covered with plaster, showing that it must once have been profusely decorated ; but the frescoes now remaining are so terribly ruined that soon they will have vanished. Seventeen cells surround the hall ; but three more were evidently intended to be excavated on the right-hand side.

Cave 5, although sharing in common a baranda with cave 4, is separated internally by a partition wall thirty-six feet thick. At the right-hand end of the baranda are a pilaster and a cell. The pilaster is not so elaborate as that at the left-hand end, and the cell does not contain a colossal statue of Buddha, but four figures of Buddha are cut in the face of the rock between this cave and cave 6.

Cave 5 is evidently, from its shape and arrangement, a lecture-hall or refectory, and hence its name, Shala. It is a parallelogram about ninety-six feet by forty-three; has no aisles, cells, stupa nor image, and is perfectly plain and without ornament, though it has been plastered and seems to have been once covered with frescoes similar to those in cave 4. Two rows of pillars, about six feet apart and twelve feet from the walls, stretch lengthways down the centre. They are eleven feet high and three feet below the ceiling. They are very peculiar. The shafts are round, smooth and unornamented throughout, and spring from the floor without any pedestal. A small astrogal, six inches from the top, which would have been a torus if properly placed, is the only ornament. Four windows and a door open directly into the air and light the cave.

There are five cells in it, three in the rear and two on the farthest side and opposite to the entrance of the schoolroom; they are larger than usual; probably designed for "arhans," or instructors. A rough ground-red plaster has covered the walls.

A door at the front right-hand side of the hall leads into a small chamber, which in turn leads into cave 6, evidently intended for residence only. It has no baranda, a door and two windows opening direct to the air. It is about forty-eight feet square and has four small cells in addition to the shrine. Six pillars once supported the roof, but they have all fallen. The walls are plastered and a few relics of frescoes can still be found among the fallen ruins.

Pythons and tigers delight in this cave for their home.

Cave 7 lies about fifteen yards farther on. It is a facsimile of 2 in arrangement, size and detail. It is about eighty-six feet square and has twenty pillars and twenty cells. However, it is so dilapidated and blocked up with fallen roof and pillars that it is difficult to enter at all. There are signs of painting on walls and pillars.

Cave 8 is connected with cave 7 by a small cell. But both this cave and Number 9 are in such a state of collapse that it is impossible to enter either of them.

The rajahs and rich people who excavated these caves wanted to keep up the spirits of the artists who, used to a worldly life but obliged to live, for a time, in such lonely surroundings, might feel depressed and therefore unable to work their best, and so they arranged for a fair to be held, throughout the whole of winter. To this, villagers from far away came to buy and sell, dance, sing and make merry, and the artists were thus able to pause in their work and relieve its monotony by mixing, as they loved to do, with joyous people.

Knowing what great care the Rajahs took of the welfare of these olden-time artists, one learns with regret that three living artists, Nanda lal

Basu, Surendra Nath Kar and Asit Kumar Haldar, who were sent in January 1921 by the Gwalior State Government to copy the frescoes at Bagh, were so badly looked after and treated that, instead of their working for the proposed time, three months at the caves, they had to run away from the gorge at the end of February after two months' work.

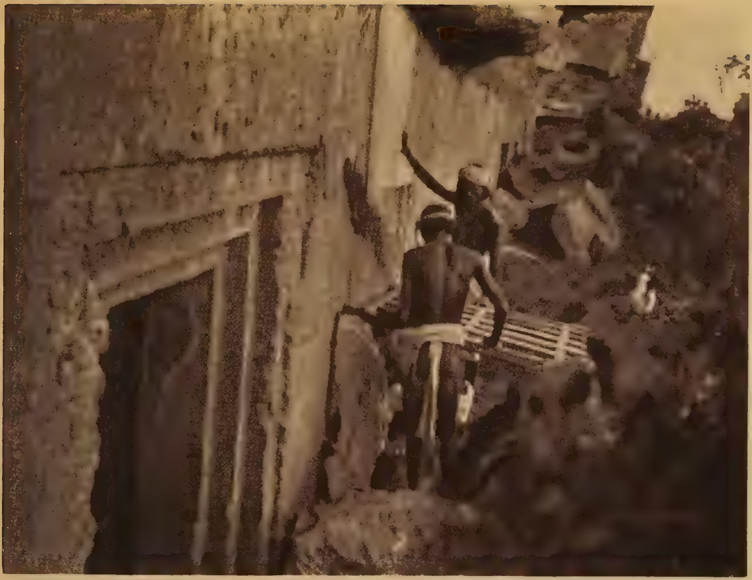
The caves are still terribly neglected, and no chowkidars are kept at the place to look after the caves and their surroundings as there are at Ajanta. It is a great pity, and they are getting blocked-up every day by rocks and jungle and are dirty and foul-smelling.

The four miles from the village to the caves were too far to travel every day and would have involved the loss of too much time, and so I threw in my lot with a family living a mile from the caves, who gave me a bed of sorts and arranged for my food of chapati (a kind of bread), milk and eggs. Daily the little procession of myself and the coolies set out for the caves.

The best frescoes are to be found in cave 4; but unfortunately they are fully exposed to weather of all kinds, as the baranda has broken away altogether.

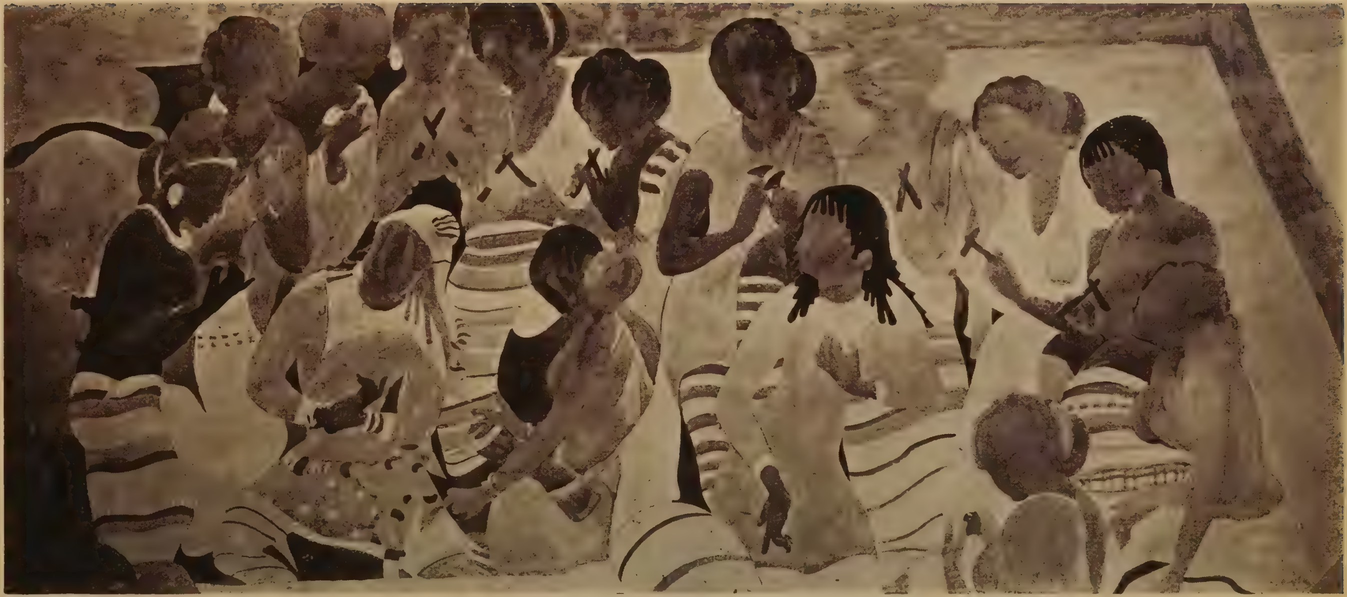
With the help of my coolies I cleared away the huge stones collected before the wall and began to trace the drawings. I then made the interesting discovery that these paintings, considered so perfect, are not really quite finished. There are groups of various kinds telling stories of ancient times, the subjects of which are not exactly known. First, a queen grieving over some sorrow is surrounded by maidens in a palace chamber and two blue pigeons sit cooing to one another on the top of the roof. Towards the right the king is holding discussion with vikshus and monks. Then, in the next part is a group of beautiful, half-nude Nautch dancing girls, led by two foreign-looking men, probably Persian guests in the Indian king's court; a very frivolous subject for a Buddhist monastery. Over a garden wall, men on horseback and others are looking at this dancing party. Elsewhere processions of elephants, rushing through gates and cities, and scenes in an Indian forest-home under the wooded river bank, all speak of a bygone civilisation.

In the frescoes at Ajanta and Bagh, one often sees in the palace-scenes a few foreigners, especially Persians, singular in their dress, complexion and type of head. For instance, at Bagh is depicted the reception of two noble Persians at the court of an Indian prince. In other frescoes are dancing girls and servants who fill the wine-



THE RANG-MAHAL.
Cave 4, Bagh.

PHOTOGRAPH OF FRESCO IN THE RANG-MAHAL.



A GROUP OF FESTIVAL DANCERS.

CAVE 4, BAGH.

From a copy in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esq., Bombay.

cup and hand it dexterously to the raja and rani. This was because the kings of India in the olden days liked to have around them servants graced with the luxurious manners of so highly civilised a country as Persia, and also because they delighted in the entertainment of noble guests from the known parts of the world. Each group, to all appearance, was perfect; but I had studied the methods of the frescoes at Ajanta so closely that I knew that the impression of complete finish was deceptive.

The difference between the work of the Bagh caves and that of the Ajanta is this: the artists of the Buddhist paintings first sketched the outline with Indian red and brush, after which they gradually modelled the figure. Then came the colours and, once more, on top of all, another outline. The highest lights, the deepest shadows, and the most delicate touches of colour were then applied, and finally black was used for details such as eyebrows, hair, etc. These last touches, however, are absent in the Bagh paintings.

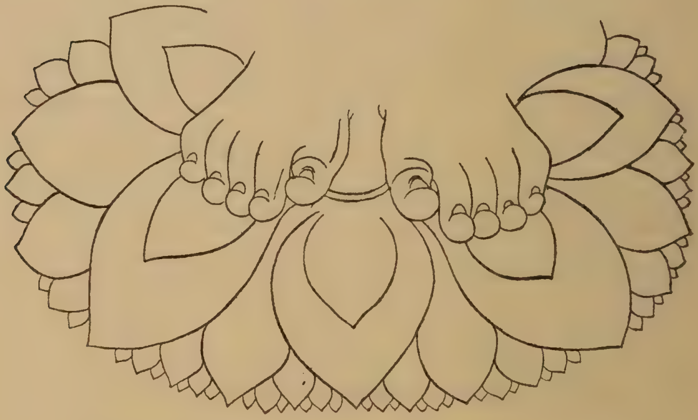
I have two theories to account for the unfinished state of these frescoes: first, that they were abandoned when it was discovered that these hills, formed as they were of soft sandstone, were unsuitable for a permanent Buddhist monastery; secondly, that during the fifth century A.D. one of the great Hun kings of western India, foiled in his ambition to become a Buddhist emperor, destroyed more than 1,600 Buddhist stupas, monuments and monasteries in disappointment and in revenge for being mocked at by the priests. This would also explain why such temples as these " caves " with their wonderful living quarters, schools and art galleries should have been deserted. In face of frequent invasion, the true worshippers disappeared from the land, but by good fortune the caves escaped destruction from the various invaders, for the jungle closed around them.

Here in the jungles of Bagh there are, as well as tigers, very old pythons, who leave their lairs at night to drink in the river Baghmati and then come through the sandy banks to the bushes above, in order to catch a goat or a buck for supper, and every morning their fresh winding trails can be seen in the soft ground. If the villagers see a python gliding towards its victim they run to rescue the animal, but do not harm the snake, taking pity on and revering it because it has lived since ancient times. They would not kill it, for fear of bad luck. In the darkest hour of night one is startled to hear a drumming sound coming from the caves. Asking the babaji why he beats the drum through the night, he says: "Tigers come to me for permission to go into the village to find food; and I tell them within the boundary of my drum's beat you must not attack any living beings, but beyond that sound you are free to kill whomever you wish." So, in gratitude for the Yogi's great kindness, the villagers supply him every day with fresh milk, sweetmeats, fruits and money.

The hillside here at Bagh is so crumbled away, and therefore dangerous, that even while excavating, the monks found the roof needed great support, and so piled up rocks to form extra columns. The frailty of the walls and ceilings is shown by the fall of earth that takes place whenever even a squirrel scampers over them. The whole year round a continual wearing away of the frescoes is going on. First, the hot sun bleaches them and then torrential rain washes over them. After the monsoon a hundred different mosses begin to grow all over the walls. An additional peril for the remains of the frescoes is that they are subject to bombardment at the hands of the shepherd boys in the fields, who let fly stones from their catapults in order to disturb tigers and see them rush out of the caves.

The art of the sculptures and frescoes in the caves of Ajanta and Bagh and in Ceylon is a rare and precious heritage of the Indian race. It is precious alike for its own artistic qualities and as a record of India's civilisation in the past.

It is not thanks to man but thanks to mighty Nature that the traces of this great art remain. Day by day the traces so wonderfully preserved for over a thousand years are becoming fainter. But there is yet time to place on record a permanent memorial of that which still remains. A great album of coloured collotype reproductions of the treasures in the various caves would be an invaluable gift to the world. And if the ruling chieftains of the territory in which the caves are situated would publish such an album, they would render an inestimable service, by once again making available to mankind the record of a perfect expression of human life.



BUDDHA'S FEET RESTING ON LOTUS FLOWERS

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